

# SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS

## CONVERSATION GUIDE



# Conversation Guide

## To Prepare South Africans for Elections

OLUSEGUN OLANIPEKUN

INSTITUTE  
FOR  
CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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**Conversation Guide: To prepare South Africans for Elections**

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"In order for evil to flourish, all that is required is for good men to do nothing."

-Edward Burke

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its flavour, with which shall it be salted? It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden underfoot of men."

-Matthew 5:13 (NKJV)

"The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in time of great moral crises maintain their neutrality."

-Alighieri Dante (1265 - 1321)

"Vote your heart out; let's see it in the elected officers."

-Olusegun Olanipekun

"In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."

-Martin Niemoeller, German Lutheran Pastor

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## PREFACE

Democracy in Africa is faced with numerous challenges today. Many are disillusioned and have reverted to violence. As someone put it: "When I raise my hand up and I am ignored, I pick up my arms." We have seen the fruit of this thought in Egypt, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, and Central African Republic. The list of nations plunged into post-election violence in Africa goes on.

There is already too much violence in the South African society to add one of a political nature. Violence must be prevented. Engagement in constructive dialogue helps people to express emotions.

While many are frustrated by Western democratic systems, no one has come up with a practical alternative that suits the people and the cultures of Africa. Universal adult suffrage remains one of the best ways for individuals to choose who leads society. Elections are useful, and the opportunity must be appreciated. "One man one vote" should not be reduced to tribal or racial block voting.

Each individual has a responsibility to ensure that his/her vote reflects his/her conscience, values, and aspirations. An elected leader represents the aggregate of the prevailing values in a society. The elected leader mirrors the collective conscience of a people. The change we seek in society must begin in us as individuals and in our families; it must reflect

in our votes. To cast a vote with blind loyalty is to dig a grave for one's country.

The purpose of this workbook is to stimulate one on one and group conversations all over the nation in preparation for the elections. I do hope that this conversation will motivate all citizens to:

- Register to vote
- Actually cast their vote
- Vote based on the hope for a positive outcome for South Africa
- Reject manipulation, violence, greed, lawlessness and a culture of corruption
- Discourage apathy
- Vote with the understanding that the wisdom of a people reflects in the leaders that are elected

Olusegun Olanipekun  
Institute for Christian Leadership Development  
Pretoria

## **Conversation Goals**

- To ensure that as many South Africans who are eligible to vote, actually vote.
- To ensure that people apply their minds to make rational and positive choice(s) of political parties and the candidates they vote for.
- To encourage the citizenry to think positively about the nation and the elections.
- It is important that citizens make an informed and educated decision regarding their vote to ensure a positive outcome for the nation.

## **Conversation Scope**

It should be possible to use this conversation guide with anyone, whether in a Christian or a Secular Society.

It should also be possible to use this guide in a one on one conversation, in formal group settings, or in ordinary social gatherings. It would be advisable that each household in South Africa work through this conversation guide before election date.

This conversation guide is not exhaustive and the user is expected to use his/her discretion to guide the conversation towards the goals listed above.



This conversation guide is designed to be used as a workbook.

The guide is made available on the ICLD website in a version where you may upload your response. This will help the ICLD team to read your responses and factor it into other operations in the effort to disciple the nation.

Nkosi Sikelele Afrika!

## Conversation Themes

1. Voting.
2. Corruption.
3. Leadership Puzzle.
4. Can one person/one vote make a difference?
5. How can we prevent violence during elections and in the nation?
6. My tribe/people group is better than yours!  
The next President must come from my tribe!
7. Race and racism in the South African society.
8. Lessons from the life of Nelson Mandela.
9. How can we own the results of the elections?
10. What qualities do we need in a political leader?

## 1. Voting

The points below serve as a guide toward preparing each person who uses it to know the registered political parties in the country as well as the candidates, characters, and policies of the party. It is not necessary to know which party another person in a conversation is voting for; the purpose is to help each person make an informed decision that is constructive and positive. It is also important to motivate each other to vote and to be aware of the election date.

1.1 Are you going to vote in the upcoming elections?

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1.2 Are you a registered voter?

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1.3 If not, why not?

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1.4 Write down the election dates.

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1.5 List the names of the registered political parties and the party leaders.

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1.6 Are you a member of a political party?

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1.7 What policies attracted you to that party?

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1.10 Are you sure that your choice within the polling booth will be based on conscience, conviction, and good reasoning? Can you avoid sentiments? Discuss any sentiments that could cloud one's choice.

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## Words of wisdom / Quotes

“It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, it may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

“I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do something I can do.”

-Edward Everett Hale

“One is not born into the world to do everything but to do something.”

-Henry David Thoreau

“Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and

daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

-Robert F. Kennedy

“Be whom God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”

-St. Catherine of Siena

“The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better.”

-Robert F. Kennedy

John 6: 1-13. A young lad gave away his lunch pack and Jesus used it to feed five thousand people. (A small contribution can have a huge impact.)



**2. Corruption**

2.1 What is corruption?

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2.2 How do I establish that someone is corrupt? What are the indicators of corruption?

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2.3 Am I corrupt?

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2.4 Do I aid and abet corruption? What does this mean?

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2.5 Have I ever checked whether the political party that I voted for and the candidates they present are corrupt?

Yes / No (No mudslinging!)

2.6 Do I have the understanding to know whether an individual is corrupt or not?

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2.7 Do I have the power to remove them?

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2.8 Can I use my vote to remove them?

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2.9 How does corruption affect my personal life?

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2.10 How does corruption destroy the economy of a nation?

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## Words of wisdom / Quotes

“Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

“I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

-Galatians 5:9

“Now the sons of Eli were corrupt.”

-1 Samuel 2: 12

“A man who has never gone to school may steal a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad.”

-Theodore Roosevelt

“The Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot have a nativity scene in Washington, D.C. This wasn't for any religious reasons. They couldn't find three wise men and a virgin.”

-Jay Leno

“The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws.”

-Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*

“To oppose corruption in government is the highest obligation of patriotism.”

-G. Edward Griffin

“How often the priest had heard the same confession--Man was so limited: he hadn't even the ingenuity to invent a new vice: the animals knew as much. It was for this world that Christ had died: the more evil you saw and heard about you, the greater the glory lay around the death; it was too easy to die for what was good or beautiful, for home or children or civilization -- it needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt.”

-Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*

“To be surrounded by sixty people who make your life miserable is to be at a family reunion. But to be surrounded by 600,000 people who make the whole world miserable is to live in Washington DC.”

-Jarod Kintz

### 3. Leadership Puzzle

3.1 Why do we get bad leaders when we all desire good leaders?

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3.2 What does it mean when it is said that a leader is bad? In other words, what are the observable traits of bad leadership?

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3.3 Apathy is one of the contributory factors to the perpetuation of bad leaders in power. Do you agree? What is apathy? Synonyms for apathy include indifference, lethargy, and laziness. Discuss how apathy could perpetuate corrupt, inept leadership.

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3.4 What other factors contribute to the prevalence and perpetuation of bad leadership?

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3.5 Is it possible for a political leader to be a good leader?

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3.6 Give examples of good, exemplary, political leaders and explain why you say so.

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3.7 Sometimes people are good before they resume political office but while in office they turn evil.

What causes good men to turn evil when they handle political power?

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3.8 Suggest ways in which democratic systems could include checks and balances that could be used to eradicate corrupt leaders from office.

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3.9 Is it possible to separate individual leaders from a political party?

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**4. Can one person/one vote make a difference? Discuss the following:**

4.1 My vote is my voice and it is important for me to be heard while I am alive. Discuss:

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4.2 My vote is my fight against corruption and evil. Discuss:

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4.3 My vote is a security towards the future that I desire for myself and my loved ones. Discuss:

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4.4 My vote is my investment into the future of South Africa. Discuss:

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4.5 My vote is the expression of my freedom and independence. Discuss:

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4.6 My vote is the expression of my values/ moral standards /ethics/ principles/beliefs. Discuss:

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4.7 Which is better: to vote now or to complain later?

Discuss:

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4.8 My vote is my contribution towards nation building and development. Discuss:

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4.9 If I sell my vote, I sell my conscience, my future, my family and my nation. Discuss:

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4.10 To sell my vote is sabotage. It is cowardice. Discuss:

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## Words of Wisdom / Quotes

“A man without a vote is a man without protection.”  
-Lyndon B. Johnson

“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”  
-Albert Einstein

“Vote your heart out; let’s see it in the elected officers.”  
-Olusegun Olanipekun

“Those who stand for nothing fall for anything.”  
-Alexander Hamilton

“If you are bored and disgusted by politics and don't bother to vote, you are in effect voting for the entrenched establishments of the two major parties who, please rest assured, are not dumb and who are keenly aware that it is in their interests to keep you disgusted and bored and cynical and to give you every possible reason to stay at home doing one-hitters and watching MTV on primary day. By all means stay home if you want, but don't bullshit yourself that you're not voting. In reality, there is *no such thing as not voting*: you either vote by voting, or you vote by staying home and tacitly doubling the value of some Diehard's vote.”  
-David Foster Wallace, *Up, Simba!*

“Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters.”

-Abraham Lincoln

“As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.”

-H.L. Mencken

“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

“Every election is determined by the people who show up.”

-Larry J. Sabato, *Pendulum Swing*

“The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.”

-Lyndon B. Johnson

“Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among you ...”

-Deuteronomy 1:13

“Violence can only be concealed by a lie, and the lie can only be maintained by violence.”

-Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn



**5. Preventing Violence**

5.1 How can we prevent violence in the nation during elections and even after elections?

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5.2 Prevention of violence is not the exclusive responsibility of the South African Police Service. Discuss:

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5.3 How can each person help the police to curb violence?

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5.4 How may one identify a political thug?

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5.5 If a political party hires thugs, is it right to go ahead and vote for that party, fully knowing that the party may continue to use bullying tactics if it gains political power?

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5.6 What do I do if I know people who are involved in violent activities?

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5.7 Should I alert the police if members of my community or my family are involved in violent activities? Will I be protected?

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5.8 What are the root causes of violence in South Africa?

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5.9 How do I deal with personal frustrations and disappointment that could manifest in anger and aggression?

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## Words of Wisdom / Quotes

“To paraphrase several sages: Nobody can think and hit someone at the same time.”

-Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

“I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

“An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

“Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.”

-E.F. Schumacher

I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends.

-Abraham Lincoln

Make the lie big, make it simple, keep saying it, and eventually they will believe it.

-Adolph Hitler

Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth.

-Albert Einstein

“You shall not murder.”

-Exodus 20:13

Probably, no nation is rich enough to pay for both war and civilization. We must make our choice; we cannot have both.

-Abraham Flexner

**6. My tribe/people group is better than yours! The next President of South Africa must come from my tribe/people group!**

6.1 Identify the various tribes and people groups in South Africa.

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6.2 Identify the unique (peculiar and beautiful) traits of different tribes in South Africa.

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6.3 Does it matter which tribe an elected officer comes from in a democratic dispensation? Discuss:

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6.4 Is tribalism real in modern South Africa? (Tribalism means loyalty to a tribe or other social group especially when combined with strong negative feelings for people outside of this group)

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6.7 What is nepotism and how can it be avoided in public office? (Definition of Nepotism: The unfair practice by a powerful person of giving jobs and other favours to relatives)

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6.8 What social ills are traceable to tribalism and nepotism?

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6.9 How can I use my language in public spaces or offices without alienating other South Africans? Discuss:

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6.10 It is possible to be proud of my tribe and be proud of my country without prejudice to either? Discuss:

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## Words of Wisdom / Quotes

“I think, tribalism is a mental prison... and pride of identity coupled with arrogance is one of the leading factors that limit one’s ability to abandon it.”

-Duop Chak Wuol

“People who think with their epidermis or their genitalia or their clan are the problem to begin with. One does not banish this spectre by invoking it. If I would not vote against someone on the grounds of 'race' or 'gender' alone, then by the exact same token I would not cast a vote in his or her favour for the identical reason. Yet see how this obvious question makes fairly intelligent people say the most alarmingly stupid things.”

-Christopher Hitchens

“When people have tried everything and have discovered that nothing works, they will tend to revert to what they know best - which will often be the tribe, the totem, or the taboo.”

-Christopher Hitchens

“In Tanganyika we believe that only evil, Godless men would make the colour of a man's skin the criteria for granting him civil rights.”

-Julius Kambarage Nyerere, addressing British Governor-General Richard Gordon Turnbull at a meeting of the Legco, prior to taking up the premiership in 1960.

"Having come into contact with a civilization which has over-emphasized the freedom of the individual, we are in fact faced with one of the big problems of Africa in the modern world. Our problem is just this: how to get the benefits of European society -- benefits that have been brought about by an organization based upon the individual -- and yet retain African's own structure of society in which the individual is a member of a kind of fellowship."

-Julius Kambarage Nyerere, as quoted in the New York Times Magazine on 27 March 1960.

"We, in Africa, have no more need of being 'converted' to socialism than we have of being 'taught' democracy. Both are rooted in our past -- in the traditional society which produced us."

-Julius Kambarage Nyerere, from his book *Uhuru na Umoja* (Freedom and Unity): Essays on Socialism, 1967.

## 7 Race and Racism in South African Politics

7.1 Is racism still an issue in South Africa? If yes, what makes you think so?

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7.2 Why should I vote or not vote on the basis of the dominant colour of skin in a particular party?

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7.3 Is it possible to stop describing people as black or white and find more suitable and inclusive ways of describing the different people groups within South Africa?

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7.4 Have you ever tried to cross the race barrier? Share your experience.

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7.5 Can we share positive experiences that we have had of the other races in South Africa?

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7.6 Are you afraid or intimidated by people of another skin colour?

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7.7 In the apartheid years, individual South Africans suffered abuses that are still not healed. Do you know anyone who still needs healing? What can you do to help that person?

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7.8 In the post-apartheid South Africa, a number of South Africans have cried out because of what is termed “reverse apartheid”. Is this a true experience? Or exaggerated?

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7.9 Are you afraid that there could be genocide in South Africa? If yes, why?

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7.10 Are you doing anything to bridge the racial divide in South Africa? Do you have a growing circle of friends among other races?

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## Words of Wisdom / Quotes

“I have a dream that one day little black boys and girls will be holding hands with little white boys and girls.”

-Martin Luther King Jr, *I Have A Dream*

“Hating people because of their colour is wrong. And it doesn't matter which colour does the hating. It's just plain wrong.”

-Muhammad Ali

“Every miserable fool who has nothing at all of which he can be proud, adopts as a last resource pride in the nation to which he belongs; he is ready and happy to defend all its faults and follies tooth and nail, thus reimbursing himself for his own inferiority.”

-Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms*

“We've got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don't fight racism with racism. We're gonna fight racism with solidarity.”

-Fred Hampton

“...racist thought and action says far more about the person they come from than the person they are directed at.”

-Chris Crutcher, *Whale Talk*

“Some white people Hate black people,  
and some white people Love black people,  
Some black people Hate white people,  
and some black people Love white people.  
So you see, it's not an issue of black and white,  
it's an issue of Lovers and Haters.”

-Eeden Ahbez

“It was obvious that bigotry was never a one-way operation,  
that hatred bred hatred!”

-Isaac Asimov, *Pebble in the Sky*

“Once hatred is allowed in a heart, it must always find an  
object but it first holds the host captive.”

-Olusegun Olanipekun

... Love one another...

-John 13:34, John 15:17

**8. Lesson to learn from the life of Nelson Mandela.  
(1918 – 2013)**

8.1 A life that reveals the possibilities that exist in the nation of South Africa. Discuss some of these possibilities.

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8.2 A life that reveals the capabilities of the human heart.

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8.3 Politics is not necessarily dirty; it is the players who decide whether it is clean or dirty. Political power does not necessarily corrupt; it is the corrupt man who corrupts politics.

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8.4 Diversity is beautiful. Discuss:

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8.5 Forgiveness and reconciliation is possible at all levels. Discuss:

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8.6 God has used Mandela's life to illustrate that peace is possible and achievable in a polarised society. Discuss:

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8.7 Patience is a virtue and we all need it. Mandela spent 27 years in prison. Discuss:

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8.8 In what ways could I emulate Mandela?

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8.9 In what areas can we improve on the Mandela legacy of forgiveness and reconciliation?

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**9. How can I own the results of the elections?**

**APPLY YOUR MIND!**

9.1 Participation (vote, campaign, discuss, motivate, encourage, pray)

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9.2 Do not repeat the mistakes of the previous years. What mistakes can we identify in the previous elections?

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9.3 Vote with your heart. Discuss:

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9.4 Vote according to your values. Discuss:

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9.5 Campaign against corruption. Discuss:

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9.6 Campaign against immorality. Discuss:

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9.7 Take a stand against tribalism. Discuss:

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9.8 Take a stand against racism. Discuss:

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**10. What qualities do I need in a political leader?**

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10.1 What do I look for in a political party before I cast my vote?

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10.2 Do I need to know the list of candidates of a party before I vote? Do I need to be sure that these candidates represent my heart's convictions? Discuss:

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10.3 Am I sure that the political party I vote for represents my values? Discuss:

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10.4 What do I hope to eliminate through my vote in these elections? Discuss:

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10.5 Am I confident to speak about those issues that I want to eradicate through my vote while tolerating the views of others? Discuss:

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10.6 What is my personal dream regarding South Africa's President? What qualities do I wish to see manifest in such a person?

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10.7 Do the same qualities as in 10.6 above apply to my Member of Parliament, Premier, Mayor and MECs?

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10.8 A leader is an aggregate (reflection) of the prevailing values in society. Discuss:

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## **National Anthem**

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika  
Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,  
Yizwa imithandazo yethu,  
Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.

Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,  
O fedise dintwa le matshwenyeho,  
O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso,  
Setjhaba sa South Afrika – South Afrika.

Uit die blou van onse hemel,  
Uit die diepte van ons see,  
Oor ons ewige gebergtes,  
Waar die kranse antwoord gee,

Sounds the call to come together,  
And united we shall stand,  
Let us live and strive for freedom,  
In South Africa our land.

