

Handout 1: The Freedom Charter

Adopted at the Congress of the People at Kliptown, Johannesburg, on June 25 and 26, 1955

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people; that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty, and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex, or belief;

And therefore we, the People of South Africa, black and white together—equals, countrymen, and brothers—adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All the people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour, or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils, and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

ALL NATIONAL GROUPS SHALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of the state, in the courts, and in the schools for all national groups and races.

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks, and monopoly industry shall be transformed to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture, and to enter all trades, crafts, and professions.

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Struggle For
Justice**

THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!

Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and hunger;

The State shall help the peasants with implements, seed, and tractors to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and force labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

ALL SHALL BE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW

No one shall be imprisoned, deported, or restricted without a fair trial;

No one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at reeducation, not vengeance;

The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour, or belief shall be repealed.

ALL SHALL ENJOY HUMAN RIGHTS!

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organize, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship, and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad;

Pass laws, permits, and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

THERE SHALL BE WORK AND SECURITY!

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers, and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The State shall recognize the right and duty of all to work and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a 40-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers, and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system, and contract labour shall be abolished.

THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND OF CULTURE SHALL BE OPENED!

The Government shall discover, develop, and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas, and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty, and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal, and equal for all children;

Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport, and in education shall be abolished.

THERE SHALL BE HOUSES, SECURITY, AND COMFORT!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space shall be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful, and no one shall go hungry;

A preventative health scheme shall be run by the State;

Free medical care and hospitalization shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, crèches, and social centers;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled, and the sick shall be cared for by the State;

Rest, leisure, and recreation shall be the right of all;

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished and laws which break up families shall be repealed.

THERE SHALL BE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP!

South Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations;

South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation—not war;

Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities, and status of all;

The people of the protectorates—Basutoland, Bechuanaland [now Lesotho and Botswana, respectively] and Swaziland—shall be free to decide for themselves their own future;

The rights of all the peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognized and shall be the basis of close cooperation.

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

**“THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGH-
OUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY.”**

Handout 2: Black Union Activist

You work in Jamison's Foods, a factory that cans food in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Recently, tensions in the factory reached the boiling point. The members of your union, the General Workers Union, met and decided to call a strike.

Workers have been getting angrier and angrier as the cost of living goes up while their wages stay the same. The average worker in Jamison's now makes about 43 rand a week. How does the company expect you to live on that when the official poverty level for a family is 54 rand a week! Conditions are even worse for women workers. They make anywhere between one third and one quarter less than men. The company has laid people off when work was slow and then forced *other* workers to accept overtime rather than rehire those laid off. If complaints are made to the white supervisors they often respond with insulting racial remarks.

Finally, five union members, chosen democratically by workers in the factory, went to talk to company officials demanding that Jamison's negotiate with the union about the workers' grievances. These people were fired. One of them, Jacob Tembu, was detained (arrested without charge) by the government. (The government has been known to torture prisoners held in detention; many have died.) You think that Tembu was arrested because he is also active in the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO), a group working to improve conditions in Port Elizabeth and ultimately to end apartheid. He is one of the most dedicated leaders for freedom in this part of the country.

Your wages and conditions at work aren't the only complaints you have these days. You live in the township of Kwazakele. Not long ago, township officials decided to raise the rent charged on your tiny house to 18 rand a month from the 15 rand you'd been paying. Even that had been too much. And if this isn't enough, bus fares also are increasing.

Worst of all, of course, is the continued oppression you feel as a black living in a racist country: having to carry the humiliating pass book, not being allowed to live where you choose, your children forced to attend inferior schools.

Your strike is for an immediate improvement in conditions, but also to say "Enough—we want the whole system to change, now!"

There are some things that you should keep in mind as you begin your strike. The union is technically an all-African organization. Coloreds are in a different, but generally supportive union. The Africans tend mostly to have unskilled or semiskilled jobs, while the somewhat higher skilled jobs are reserved for the Colored workers. Almost all the supervisors are white.

Many of the Africans at Jamison's are contract workers. They are considered citizens of various Bantustans, generally the Transkei or Ciskei—and are only allowed to be in Port Elizabeth so long as they are at work. A strike could jeopardize their legal right to stay in Port Elizabeth.

Another thing to consider as the strike begins: Jamison's has recently invested lots of money in heavy machinery. The company would probably find it difficult to weather a long strike or a steep decline in the amount of their canned goods being sold.

You've decided to hold a workers' meeting to determine democratically the best ways to carry on the strike. Remember, as you begin your meeting: **Your goal is not only to win higher wages or better conditions at Jamison's. Your ultimate objective is to work towards the kind of society described in the *Freedom Charter*.**

Handout 3: Planning the Strike: Questions

1. **What should be the demands of the strike?** Keep in mind that you can demand things you may not expect to win immediately but which might help to educate others about what should be fought for. Be aware that if your strike appears “political”—demanding changes that go beyond higher wages and better working conditions—you run the risk of increased government harassment. This is not to say you shouldn’t be political, only to remind you of the risks.
2. Already the government has declared your strike illegal. You did not go through all the proper channels that might allow you to have a legal strike. Doing that could take between 12 and 18 months. **Should you call off your strike for the time being in order to try to get the government to legalize the walkout?**
3. The company has offered to reinstate four of the five fired workers. However, they say Jacob Tembu is a troublemaker and is not welcome back at Jamison’s. The company also promises that if the strikers go back to work they will begin negotiations with workers about raising wages and improving conditions. **How will you respond to the company’s new offer and the refusal to rehire Tembu?**
4. The company is doing all it can to get the mostly skilled Colored workers to stay on the job so they can keep production going. Management is promising Colored workers wage increases if they remain working. Company officials have also been telling the Colored workers that they would be foolish to stick with a bunch of Africans since they have much more in common with whites. After all, they argue, Coloreds now sit in the national parliament and there is even a Colored cabinet minister. **What arguments will you use to convince the Colored workers that they should come out on strike with other black workers? Think of as many as you can.**
5. On one occasion the government attacked and beat up strikers as they picketed the factory. Officials invoked the 1982 Intimidation Act which makes it illegal to use “threats,” “jeers,” or “jibes” to keep others from working. Already, 15 of you have been arrested for violating that law. If convicted, these people would face up to ten years in prison and a fine of 19,000 rand. **How will you respond to this harassment? Will you continue to picket at Jamison’s?**
6. You know that in order to win the strike and also to help move South Africa towards the democracy described in the Freedom Charter you need to gain the support of people who work and live in the Port Elizabeth area. (Better still would be to reach people throughout the entire country.) The company, however, is trying to recruit people to take your jobs—to “scab”—from the very townships in which the strikers live. The owners of Jamison’s also continue to make money by selling their products in and around Port Elizabeth.

There are a number of crucial questions you need to answer thoughtfully: **What arguments can you use to convince the people of the community that this is *their* strike too? Are there ways you can involve community members in your strike actions? Are there actions you could encourage people to take in *their own interests* that might also help you? (Note: Consider these questions carefully. Answering them well is the key to a successful strike.)**

7. As you know, many black workers at Jamison’s are “on contract”—considered citizens of different bantustans but allowed to live around Port Elizabeth so long as they are at work. The company has given the government a list of all the strikers who are on contract. Unless these workers immediately return to work the government says it will “deport” them back to their homelands, with no possibility of ever again legally working in Port Elizabeth. **How will you respond to these threats of “deportations?”**