

The Robben Island Singers Song Guide

SONG GUIDE

"Singoban' Thina" (Who are we?)

"Sizothabatha Umthwalo" (We will take our belongings)

This is a motivational song about packing up all of our belongings and leaving the country to join Umkhonto Wessizwe (ANC MK) to get military training.

"Sikhalela Izwe lakithi" (We are crying for our country that was taken by the colonizers)

"Izinqa ZikaMahlalela" (The buttocks of the unemployed are as hard as concrete)

We sang this song about being homesick on the island and longing to be with a girlfriend. But this nostalgic song was originally created in a different context. The song first came about as an ironic commentary on the sadness of being unemployed far from home. Day laborers (living in men-only dormitories) would sit along the road in the cities far from their homes, in the hope of being picked up by an employer to find work for that day. If you are not called upon for work, your seat might become cemented, metaphorically-speaking!

"Sizobadubula Ngombayimbayi" (We are going to fight by using big cannons)

This song was very popular among youth because it gave encouragement. It declares war against Apartheid and committed us to use weapons.

"Sihole we Mqabuko"

We remember the comrades who died with this song.

"Silindel' Impendulo"

We are Waiting for an Answer (We Won't Strike Without an Answer)]

"Luthuli Bambiza E Oslo"

This song is a tribute to Chief Albert Luthuli, president of the African National Congress in the late 1950's and early 60's. Chief Luthuli was the first South African to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

"Guerilla Sizobabulala"

This is an MK (Umkhonto Wessizwe) song that we sung when we were getting ready to fight on the front lines. It means, "We will kill them I swear by my mother that we will kill them. When I jumped the fence I saw the hippo (a war truck which was used to kill young students during the fighting for freedom) running away. When I jumped the fence I saw Voster (he was the South African minister during Apartheid regime) running away."

"Sasolburg"

This song is about how a South African oil refinery was sabotaged by the ANC.

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“TOI TOI” (War dance)

"Take Over" (Take Our Country the Castro Way)

This song pays homage to Fidel Castro, who had supported the South African struggle against Apartheid.

"Avante Popular"

In Spanish, this song translates roughly to “Viva Communism.” We were taught this song by a Cuban fighter.

"Chimurenga Dzakatanga" (The struggle continues in Zimbabwe)

This song is in Shona, the largest linguistic group in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean African People Union (ZAPU) was formed by workers and peasants. This song talks about Ian Smith (Former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe) and how he caused the conflict in Zimbabwe.

Interlude

“Kure Kure Kwa Ndinobva” (Far Away is My Home)

“Far away is my home. Mother and father we shall meet in Zimbabwe. When we come home we shall meet in Zimbabwe. Mozorewa, Smith, Chirawu you will shiver like cowards. When we come to Zimbabwe.

“Sugar Lump”

Sugar was a scarcity for prisoners. They were deprived of sugar, but also sugar was used as a source of energy during the hunger strikes.

"What a System" (What a Crime)

These satirical words are sung to the tune of *Oh my darling, Clementine*.

"Ama Come Duze" (Come Closer Sweetheart, Daddy is Here)

A folk song we used to sing when missing our girlfriends and wives

"Bulawayo" (The Enemy Appears From Around the Corner?)

We learned this song from MK veterans who fought with the Zimbabweans to conquer Smith (He was Zimbabwe's president then).

"Umzabalazo Uyasivumela" Everywhere the Struggle is in Our Favor

The song gives one strength and confidence. It is still relevant and people still sing it during commemorations.

"Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" God Bless Africa (South Africa's National Anthem)