

SPEAK UP
SOUTH AFRICA

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CAMPAIGN T-SHIRTS

RATIONALE

Expression takes many forms. People express themselves through writing, speaking, singing, art and countless other creative practices. One form of expression that often goes unnoticed is what we choose to wear. Clothing is something we engage with every day, and even when the choices feel simple or unconscious, those choices still communicate something about who we are. Clothing can also become a deliberate statement when people use it to show support for a cause, a movement or an organisation. Wearing a specific item becomes a message that others can see, understand and connect with.

Merchandise is sometimes viewed as a secondary or optional part of a campaign, but it can be one of the most effective tools for building visibility and engagement. When people support something, one of the first things they often want is an item that allows them to show their support publicly. Clothing is especially powerful because it travels with the wearer, allowing the message to reach different spaces, audiences and communities. With this in mind, I wanted to create t-shirt designs that would not only look appealing but would also serve as a form of advocacy for the right to freedom of expression in South Africa.

My submission consists of five t-shirt designs created specifically for the Speak Up South Africa campaign. Each design uses the colours of the South African flag. These colours are instantly recognisable and symbolise unity, diversity and the democratic values of the country. By limiting the palette to these colours, I wanted to create a sense of cohesion across the designs and to emphasise the connection between national identity and the right to express ourselves freely.

The designs focus strongly on typography. Words are one of the most direct ways to communicate, and I wanted to show that typography can be just as

bold and impactful as imagery. The phrase "Speak Up, South Africa" is the central slogan across the t-shirts. It is a clear and intentional call to action that encourages people to think, ask questions and take part in open dialogue. The slogan is designed to spark curiosity and invite people to consider what it means to speak up in a country where freedom of expression is a protected constitutional right.

Freedom of expression matters deeply to me because it underpins almost every other right we have. Without the ability to speak, create or share ideas, we lose the opportunity to question injustices or contribute to positive change. Through these designs, I wanted to highlight that this right belongs to all South Africans and that it should be visible, celebrated and protected. Clothing is an accessible way to remind people that their voices carry power and that expressing themselves can help strengthen our democracy.

I designed the t-shirts using Adobe Illustrator. Working on this project allowed me to explore new tools and techniques within the software, and it helped me grow both technically and creatively. Creating the designs was not only a submission for the competition but also a valuable learning experience that developed my skills in typography, layout, colour use and visual communication.

Overall, the intention behind the project was to show how clothing can turn personal expression into a shared message. A t-shirt can reach people in ways that posters, articles or speeches sometimes cannot. By combining design with advocacy, I wanted to create work that people could wear with pride, work that encourages conversation and work that keeps the importance of freedom of expression alive in everyday spaces.

THE IDEA

My submission consists of five t-shirt designs created as marketing or merchandise for the Speak Up South Africa campaign. Clothing itself is a powerful form of personal expression, but these designs go further by promoting South Africa's constitutional right to freedom of expression. Each shirt incorporates the colours of the national flag, reflecting the country's unity and democratic values. The designs focus on typography, showing that words can be as impactful and visually striking as images. Through bold, wearable statements, the t-shirts turn everyday clothing into a medium for advocacy, creativity, and collective pride in free expression.



PROCESS

In creating the t-shirt designs, I focused on strong typographic principles such as hierarchy, legibility and balance to ensure that the message "Speak Up, South Africa" remained bold and immediately recognisable. I explored how type can function not only as text but also as a visual element that shapes mood and impact. I also worked with limited colour palettes, alignment, spacing and contrast to create clean, cohesive layouts. Throughout the process, I used Adobe Illustrator and learned several new skills, including working with type tools, manipulating vector shapes, refining compositions and improving my ability to design for print-ready formats.











