

Pronunciation Lesson

A Black Mississippi Judge's Breathtaking Speech To 3 White Murderers

"New generations have attempted to pull Mississippi from the abyss of moral depravity in which it once so proudly floundered. Despite much progress and the efforts of the new generations, these three defendants are before me today: Deryl Paul Dedmon, Dylan Wade Butler and John Aaron Rice. They and their co-conspirators ripped off the scab of the healing scars of Mississippi...causing her (our Mississippi) to bleed again."

"In the Mississippi we have tried to bury, when there was a jury verdict for those who perpetrated crimes and committed lynchings in the name of White Power...that verdict typically said that the victim died at the hands of persons unknown."

"Today, though, the criminal justice system (state and federal) has proceeded methodically, patiently and deliberately seeking justice. Today we learned the identities of the persons unknown...they stand here publicly "

"Justice, however, will not be complete unless these defendants use the remainder of their lives to learn from this experience and fully commit to making a positive difference in the New Mississippi. And, finally, the court wishes that the defendants also can find peace."

Extract from : NPR.org, Feb 2015

1. Distribute copies of speech. Begin by reading speech out loud while students follow along. They can mark any words they are uncertain of, either in meaning or pronunciation.
2. Solicit vocabulary questions and define challenging words. Explain the general meaning of the text : who wrote it, what he fought for.
3. Introduce the vowel sounds we'll be working on (see below). Have students find and mark these sounds on their papers.
4. Show students how to physically make those sounds. (For example, to make the "ou" sound, have them put their hands on their cheeks/jaw and feel their cheeks/jaw make a circle as they pronounce the sound. Can also liken this to the motion/sound one makes when yawning.)
5. Practice making the sounds with students a few times as a class, then incorporating the sounds into words from the speech. Have students practice this for a few minutes in pairs.
6. Introduce the idea of word stress in multi-syllable words and demonstrate where the stress falls in different words. Ask the class for examples from the speech. Have students mark multi-syllable words and practice in pairs.
7. Expand the idea of word stress to sentence emphasis and intonation. Read paragraph three as an example and ask students to mark the places where they hear emphasis, pauses and/or changes in intonation (not all at the same time – reread paragraph as necessary). Practice using emphasis by reading the paragraph out loud together.
8. Have students work in pairs to practice the speech, first alternating paragraphs, then on their own, while I circulate.

Vowel sounds:

Ou = proudly, floundered

O = progress, positive

A (various sounds) = and, scab, again, hands, stand

U = justice, publicly, fully

Miscellaneous = causing, lynchings

Suggested by **Ellie Hoffman**, American Assistant