

YOUTH DAY - JUNE 16

South Africa observes Youth Day every June 16 **in remembrance of the Soweto Uprising**. While it occurred in 1976, the Soweto Uprising's roots go back to 1953 and the introduction of the Bantu Education Act.

The Bantu school system was grossly inequitable. Black South Africans were trained for roles like laborer, worker, and servant and were insulated from subversive ideas, aligning with the racist arc of the South African apartheid system, while being relegated into schools with substandard facilities and teaching materials. Organizations like the Black Consciousness Movement and South African Students Organization helped raise consciousness among Black students about the quality of education the apartheid government provided.

In 1974, the government made the Afrikaans language (of Dutch origin) compulsory in South African education, alongside English. This set in motion further student organizing, which led to a march in Soweto on June 16, 1976, where between 3,000 and 10,000 students marched peacefully in protest.



Naledi Secondary School in Johannesburg.
Place where Soweto Uprising started.

They were met by heavily armed police who shot at them.

The protest, now an "uprising," spread across South Africa. More than 1,000 students died, mostly at the hands of the police.

*"We assemble to once more say:
Thank you, to our youth who were at
the forefront of the struggle against
apartheid.*

– Nelson Mandela, June 16, 1996

We hope to inspire you to continue Mandela's legacy by committing to serve the youth in your communities with "My Mandela Pledge"!

mpm.edu/pledge

Sources: sahistory.org.za/mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/1996/960616_youth.htm