

11 June 2021

To: Subject Advisors, Teachers, Departmental Heads

Topic: What happened on 16 June 1976? And how can youth use this event to promote reading?

Message Objective: To share ways of engaging youth to promote reading in communities.

In January 1976, the Afrikaner-dominated government of South Africa mandated that all school subjects be taught in Afrikaans in schools for black learners. The government recognised only English and Afrikaans as official languages, and all indigenous languages were banned. The decision caused an uproar amongst parents, teachers, and students, so on the morning of 16 June 1976, 16-year-old Antoinette Sithole and an estimated 20,000 students from Soweto and the surrounding secondary and high schools, planned to peacefully protest Afrikaans as the primary teaching language in schools.

The protest was planned by the Soweto Students Representative (SSRC), with support from the wider Black Consciousness Movement, teachers, and parents. The students began the march to Orlando Stadium, only to find out that police had barricaded the road along their intended route. The leader of the SSRC asked the crowd not to provoke the police, and the march continued on another route. The police responded to the protest by firing teargas and later live ammunition at demonstrating students. The police began to shoot at the protesters and in the confusion and chaos, Sithole's 13-year-old brother, Hector Pieterse was fatally shot.

In remembrance of this day, the youth can use it to promote reading in several ways.

Firstly, the youth can initiate Virtual Reading Clubs where they can discuss books that can teach them how to extend reading networks and be responsible citizens of the country. More information on how to activate virtual reading or join the president's reading circle could be obtained on [www.nrc.org.za](http://www.nrc.org.za)

Secondly, community structures such as schools, churches and community can coordinate dialogue sessions where youth can discuss the roles they can play to champion reading in communities. Topics related to youth development through reading could be discussed in such dialogues to be able to help youth think progressively than clinging on the atrocities caused by the previous regime.

Thirdly, schools can hold exhibitions on how youth can play a role to bring different cultures together through reading. In the apartheid era only English and Afrikaans were recognised whereas in the democratic South Africa all indigenous languages are recognised equally. So, exhibitions can play a role to bring together youth from various background to share ideas.

Lastly, youth seminars and conferences can be organised to share key aspects that learners should consider when following careers. Learners could be given opportunities to share written articles on youth and careers. Relevant books that can help develop reading skills can be shared or displayed in such events

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Reference:

[www.nrc.org.za](http://www.nrc.org.za)