Most people would agree that it wouldn’t be fair if you were only allowed to speak certain languages in school. And that was what the students of Soweto thought as well. The Soweto uprising was a riot which started on June 16th, 1976 and lasted three days. Students, teachers, parents, and civilians of Soweto, South Africa were involved in this boycott. The Soweto uprising made an impact and received attention from other countries. What was the cause of this protest, and how was this conflict solved?

**What was the cause of the riot, and what happened?**

Students holding up a poster that reads “Afrikaans Must Be Abolished!”

Many people participated in the boycott, as you can see above.

The cause of the Soweto uprising was that the black students didn’t get a good education, and they were compelled by the law to use Afrikaans and English instead of their native language. Even though the students and teachers were furious about this law, they first protested non-violently, but after the policemen tried to intervene, the protest became more brutal. This policemen started using guns, and released the dogs. This lasted for three days, and because of the violent actions of the police, the riot eventually ended. The Soweto uprising was a significant event that included many injuries. The police estimated that 176 people died, 1139 people got injured, and 1298 people got arrested.
After the uprising, South Africa received negative attention from the rest of the world. A number of countries refused to sell or buy any merchandise with South Africa. Because South Africa couldn’t buy or sell products from other countries, they didn’t gain money or get the merchandise they needed. This helped stop segregation because South Africa needed these products and money that they used to profit from, and without this separation between colored and white people, they would be able to have necessities. They also didn’t want to compete against South Africa in international sports. For example, South Africa wasn’t able to participate in the 1964 Summer Olympics, which were held in Tokyo. Unfortunately, no other country tried to help South Africa fight against segregation. The other countries’ reaction was a negative result, but now, this event is recognized as a step to standing up for freedom.

Eventually, the black students got the education that they deserved, and South Africa experienced a major change. The Soweto uprising itself didn’t exactly solve the situation, because Apartheid began as well. Apartheid was when white and non-white people were separated. For example, colored people weren’t allowed to use the same restrooms as the white people. But when Apartheid finally ended and Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa in 1994, the black students got better education. June 16 is now recognized as Youth day, and Hector Pieterson, who is believed to be one of the first students shot, and is now the symbol of Youth day. After the riot, many people were inspired to fight for their rights.
Because of the many students, teachers, parents, and civilians involved in the three-day protest and their brave actions, any student can get the education that he/she deserves—whether they are white or colored. South Africa realized that they needed to change when the rest of the world refused to trade or participate in activities such as sports with them. The day the students fought for their right to speak their native language, June 16, is now known as Youth day. Many inspirational people and leaders in the riot helped the world realize how segregation was a severe way of exclusion.

Sadly, many died while fighting for a understandable, equal law and education. Though this changed the world, was there a way to prevent such violence?

Students show they don’t want to speak Afrikaans with their posters and signs.

Hector Pieterson carried to a car after being shot.

Many people were furious about the law.

Students were not the only ones who participated in the riot.
Bibliography -

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