

# RISING AGAINST RACISM



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## Lesson Summary

This session will focus on two different examples of youth-led anti-racist campaigning, drawing on contemporary and historical examples. The case studies are the Soweto Uprising which occurred in South Africa, 1976, and the Ferguson Protests in the USA, 2014, which helped propel #Blacklivesmatter into the international spotlight.

## Learning Objectives

- To learn about how racism has existed in different societies.
- To find out about how protests developed in Soweto, South Africa and Ferguson, USA and the long term and short term causes of these protests.
- To encourage reflection on how we can support people struggling against inequality.

### United Nations Sustainable Development Links

- Quality Education
- Reduced inequality
- Peace, Justice, and strong institutions

### Curriculum Links

- English
- History
- Citizenship
- Personal, Social and Health Education

### British Council Core Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Student Leadership
- Collaboration and Communication
- Citizenship



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Note

Some of the images in the slideshow may be distressing or upsetting for students, so please use discretion when considering whether or not to use them. It may be worth letting students know in advance that these images will come up.

If you are unsure of how to approach conversations about racism and violence, particularly in contemporary settings, the Anti-Defamation League have several articles which can help inform interactions and discussions.

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/teaching-about-racism-violence-inequity-and-the-criminal>



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity One: Soweto Uprising: Outline and Impact

**Requires:** Slides 2 to 7, Activity 1 sources.

**Preparation:** Ensure you are aware of the facts of this event and enough copies of the worksheet are printed.

- Outline the events that happened in Soweto 1976 by showing slides 2-7.
- Ask for volunteers to read aloud the three activity one sources, and afterwards pose the following questions:
- How do these sources make you feel?
- What kind of protest did the students have planned in Soweto on June 1976?
- Why do you think the protests turned violent?
- Why do you think these protests inspired Phulma Williams to become an activist?

## Activity Two: The long-term causes of the Soweto Uprising

**Requires:** Activity 2 sources.

**Preparation:** Ensure enough copies of the worksheet are printed

- Show the students the tables giving information about South Africa in the 1970s. Give them time to study the statistics and ask them to read the quote from Tebello Motapanyane before asking the following questions.
- What do you find most surprising or shocking about these statistics?
- What do they tell us about South Africa at the time of the Soweto Uprising? What other grievances might black communities in South Africa have had?
- Do you think other factors than the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974 contributed to the size and scale of the protests? What do you think they might have been?



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity Three: #BlackLivesMatter and the Ferguson Protests

**Requires:** Slides 8 - 12, Activity 3 Sources.

**Preparation:** Ensure you are aware of the facts about this event and that enough copies of the sources are printed.

- Ask students if they have heard of *Black Lives Matter*. If one of them has, ask them to explain to the rest of the group.
- Give students a little more context by going through slides 8-11. Show them the picture of Edward Crawford in slide 12 and ask the following questions.
  - What do you think is happening in this picture?
  - How does it make you feel?
  - This image went viral-people made it into artworks and drawings. Why do you think it had this power?
- Ask one student to read aloud the description of events in activity three source A and ask students:
  - Did Edward's description of events change the way you felt about the photograph?
  - Why was that?

## Activity Four: Long-term Causes of the Ferguson Protests

**Requires:** Slide 13 and source 4

**Preparation:** Ensure enough copies of the worksheet are printed.

- Ask one person to read aloud the extract from the Guardian newspaper before asking the following questions:
- What picture does the extracts from the Guardian article paint of racial relations in Ferguson?
- Do the statistics help explain why the protests in Ferguson went on for so long? Why?



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity Five: Placard Making

**Requires:** Large pieces of card/paper, coloured pens

**Preparation:** Ensure that there are enough pieces of card/paper for all students to have one each, and enough coloured pens to share

- Imagine that you are a protestor in either Soweto, 1976, or Ferguson, 2014. You have agreed to make two placards for the demonstration for people to hold up.
- One should be about the immediate issue, which has sparked the protest, and the other should be about some of the long-term factors, which have also motivated protestors.
- Ask students to think:
  - What is a simple, succinct way of explaining what your grievances are?
  - What are the differences between the immediate issues and the longer-term causes?
  - What would be visually eye-catching?

# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity One Sources

Descriptions based on eyewitness accounts of how the Soweto protests turned into an uprising against Apartheid.

### *A Historian reflects on the events of June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1976*

Fifteen thousand youth, ranging in age from 10 to 20 years, were ready to march off, bearing slogans written on cardboard torn from packing cases or the stiff covers of old exercise books. The banners were all makeshift and bore signs of rapid construction. The slogans were simple and to the point:

**Down with Afrikaans**

**Afrikaans is the oppressors' language**

**Abolish Afrikaans**

The column that wound its way through the streets of Orlando was, by all reports, carefree and jovial... Then, apparently, a message got to the leader of the column that the police were coming. Sophie Tema, veteran reporter, in recalling the event as she saw it, said that one of leaders stopped the column and addressed the students:

"Please brothers and sisters I plead with you, remain cool and calm. A report has just been received to say the police are coming. We do not know what they are after; after all we are not fighting. All we want is that the department and officials must listen to the grievances of our brothers and sisters in the lower schools."

*(Year of Fire, Year of Ash The Soweto Revolt: Roots of a Revolution? Baruch Hirson, p.181)*

### *A student protestor reflects on what happened on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1976:*

Despite the tense atmosphere the students remained calm and well ordered. Suddenly a white policeman lobbed a teargas canister into the front of the crowd. People ran out of the smoke dazed and coughing. The crowd retreated slightly but remained facing the police, waving placards and singing. A white policeman drew his revolver. Black journalists standing by the police heard a shot: "Look at him. He's going to shoot at the kids". A single shot ran out. There was a split seconds silence and pandemonium broke out. Children screamed. More shots were fired. At least four students fell and others ran screaming in all directions.

*(Brooks & Brickhill Whirlwind before the storm, 1980)*



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity One Sources cont.

***Phulma Williams an anti - apartheid activist reflects on how she got involved in the protests and the impact it had on her life.***

In June 1976, I was 16 years old and a student in Musi High School. On the 16th, when the student uprising started in Orlando, our school was still having normal classes. In fact, on that day, I was writing my half-yearly test of the Afrikaans paper.

The students crossed Soweto and protested over night. On the 17 June, Musi High students joined the protest. My activism started then.

I came to realise that African children's education was designed to be inferior to the other races in [South Africa](#), and that the conditions under which I was being schooled were unlikely to change unless I took action.

One of the sad memories that still lingers with me was one my schoolmates who was shot and killed. She was one of those who did not participate in the protest, but a stray bullet hit her whilst she was sweeping the yard at her home. This was the madness of the system we were dealing at time.

... But a lot still needs to be done. Education remains the pillar to a better life.

(Remembrances from Phumla Williams, from a Guardian interview)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/16/my-activism-started-then-the-soweto-uprising-remembered>





# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity Two Sources:

This table shows the differences that Black and White South Africans faced in their daily lives.

Statistics for South Africa 1978		
	Black South Africans	White South Africans
Population	19 million	4.5 million
Land Allocation (land where you could live)	13%	87%
Ratio of Average Income	1	14
Share of National Income	20%	75%
Doctors per population	1 to 44,000 people	1 to 400 people
Infant mortality rates	20% in cities 40% in rural areas	3%
Annual Expenditure on each student's education by the government	\$45	\$696
Teacher-Student Ratio	1 teacher to 60 students	1 teacher to 22 students

<http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html>

This table shows what living conditions were like for Black South Africans living in Soweto in 1976

Soweto, 1976	
Population	1.5 million
Percentage of homes with electricity	20%
Percentage of homes with hot water	5%
Number of homeless people	400,000
Hospitals	1
Schools	280
Number of students per class	60
Average rent per month	40\$
Average income per month	100\$

(‘What is History? Skotaville Educational Division, p.45)



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity Two Sources: Cont.

***A South African student leader describes the protests in the months before the Soweto Uprising.***

As early as March 1976, Thonas Mofolo was the first school to have Afrikaans imposed on it, and immediately there was a student protest.

In March 1976, the principal called in the police to cool the students and force them to accept Afrikaans. Some students from my school, Naledi High School, went there to investigate their problems, We also visited schools in Meadowlands. We found that these students also felt bitter about what the government was doing. They immediately stopped attending classes because they felt as we did that what was needed was a positive reaction

...

**(Tebello Motapanyane, Secretary General of the South African Students Movement, quoted in *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, pp.177-8)**



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity Three Source

***Edward Crawford who was pictured in a famous image from the Ferguson unrest reflects on when he first arrived at the protests.***

I talked to my mother, who told me to not get in trouble and be careful. We drove out there, to the protest area, which the police had blocked off. We parked the car on a church lot, because the police had all the streets blocked off. We walked to the protest area. At this time, you just see a bunch of police. You see police on every corner. There were a million of them. The police were in riot gear. They had their tactical helmets, riot shields, and batons. They were standing in a straight line, like a wall of defense. There was a guy chanting, "Go home! Return to your vehicles!" And he just kept saying that. But people weren't listening.

The police got so close. All of a sudden, they stopped. They were just looking at us. We were just looking at them. They were still hitting their batons to their shields. They yelled for people to get out of the street. They marched forward, and they began shooting tear gas and rubber bullets.

I remember there were reporters out there. Police were shooting tear gas while these people were filming. I remember people started running. It was so loud. It sounded like a cannon going off. And you just see the canisters spinning in the sky and landing not even close to us. I was like, "Okay, they're just trying to scare us." They shot another one, and it landed a little closer.

They shot another one, and it landed in the group I was in. When I saw it, it didn't look like tear gas. It was on the ground, it was spinning, and it was, like, the size of a soda can that you get out of a vending machine. It had fire on it. I really didn't know what it was, because I had never seen tear gas. People were screaming. So my first initial thought was, "I just need to get this away from people," because it was smoking and had fire on it. So I just chucked it, threw it out of the way.

***(Interview with Edward Crawford)***

<https://www.vox.com/2015/8/10/9123517/ferguson-protests-michael-brown-oral-history>



# RISING AGAINST RACISM

## Activity Four Source

### ***Extracts from a Guardian article which examine race relations in Ferguson before the protests***

... The underlying, bitter resentment among many in the local African American community about their treatment at the hands of an almost unanimously white police force and local authorities will likely continue to simmer.

Ferguson's population is 67% black, but 50 of Jackson's 53 police officers – 94% - are white. Figures published last year by Missouri's attorney general showed seven black drivers were stopped by police for every white driver, and that 12 times as many searches were carried out on black drivers as white. The sharp disparities fuel mistrust, residents said.

... [O]ne after another, young black residents complained to the Guardian about the way they have been treated by those in positions of power in the city over recent years. Their claims against police officers in particular ranged from disrespect to "all-out race war."

"Black people see all these layers of white authority that do not like them, do not understand them and do not respect them," said Bynes, who is black. "When the traffic court is in session here you will have a white judge, a white prosecutor and a line of black people waiting to pay penalties wrapping around the block. It breeds resentment and anger"

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/13/michael-brown-ferguson-murder-race-relations-white-police>



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