

The Black Consciousness Movement

- **The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) was a grassroots level movement that was started in the 1960s**
 - It was started by University students led by Steve Biko, a medical student in the University of Natal
 - The Black Consciousness (BC) ideas started in 1968 when black students broke away from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS)
 - These Students which included Steve Biko and others started black student organization called South African Student Organisation (SASO)
 - They rejected NUSAS because it was dominated by white students and it represented white students' interests
 - SASO was formed to represent black students
 - The Black Consciousness (BC) ideas started when SASO was formed
 - Later BC became a South African Movement called Black Consciousness Movement
 - **Role of Steve Biko in the formation of BCM**
 - Steve Biko was an anti - apartheid activist in the 1960s and 1970s
 - He was a student leader and founded Black Consciousness Movement
 - He played a major role in making black people to be proud of being black
 - He wrote books like 'I Write What I Like' that encouraged black pride
-
- **BCM was an idea not a political organisation**
 - It was an idea that promoted black pride
 - It realised that blacks had become inferior and are dominated by whites
 - BCM wanted to end the inferiority complex among blacks
 - It encourage blacks to be proud of being black
 - It encourage blacks to stand up and fight apartheid
 - It encouraged blacks to start doing things on their own and not wait for white people to help them
 - It spread ideas which were preaching that black was good
 - **BCM engaged in many activities in South Africa during the 1960s and 1970s**
 - BCM helped many black communities to start their own schools and pre-schools for black children
 - BCM helped many blacks to start their own businesses
 - It was able to unite blacks, coloureds and Indians against apartheid
 - It was able to spread Black Conscious ideas all over South Africa
 - It also started Black People's Convention which became an umbrella body for organisations fighting against apartheid

- **BCM spread to many parts of South Africa**
- BCM spread to work places in the mines and in black workers' Unions
- BCM also spread to Soweto schools
- Many BCM leaders and members were expelled from Universities like Turf loop University
- The expelled students became teachers in many secondary schools in Soweto
- They spread the Black Consciousness ideas among students
- **BCM ideas was spread among students and this led to the 1976 Soweto uprising**
- Because of the Bantu Education Act, the government spent less on black education, there was a shortage of schools, shortage of teachers and black schools were overcrowded
- Black parents and students were not happy about bantu education
- In 1975 the government made Afrikaans a compulsory teaching and learning language in black school
- Students rejected Afrikaans because they were conscientised by BCM, they saw it as a language of the oppressor
- Both teachers and learners were not competent in Afrikaans
- They struggle to learn or even teach in Afrikaans
- Students started to organise meetings to discuss Afrikaans and apartheid
- Students formed secondary school movement called South African Student Movement (SASM)
- SASM organized meetings with different schools and planned for the 16th June 1976 Soweto uprising
- Key people who organised the meetings and the march were among others; Tsietsi Mashinini, Khotso Seatlholo. Murphy Morobe and Seth Mazibuko
- **On the morning of the 16th June 1976 about 20000 students from different schools marched demanding an end to Afrikaans as a teaching language and better conditions in schools**
- Police used teargas and live ammunition to disperse the students
-

- Students retaliated with stones and petrol bombs
- Many students were shot, some were injured and others were killed
- Among those who died were young 12 years old Hector Peterson and a 15 years old Hastings Ndlovu who were shot at, at Orlando West High school
- Students became angry and went on the rampage; they burned schools, cars, and many government property
- Many students were arrested and others left the country and joined the ANC and PAC in exile
- **After 1976 many BCM leaders were arrested and others were killed**
- Steve Biko was also banned from organising any meeting
- Many BCM members and leaders went to exile
- In exile they joined the newly formed Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO)

- AZAPO continued to exist until 1994, when South Africa became a democratic country
- Steve Biko was arrested on 18 August 1977 during a roadblock near Grahamstown, Eastern Cape.
- He was taken to Pretoria prison where he was tortured and died in the hands of police on the 12th September 1977
- Police claimed that he died of hunger strike but it was later revealed that he died of brain damage as a result of torture by the police
- No one was arrested for his death