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GET IN, GET IN . . . Students being loaded into a police vehicle during the uprising that started on June 16 and changed the nature of 'the struggle' forever

What do you know of June 16?

A LOT of water has flowed under the bridge since that fateful day on June 16, 1976 when school students stormed onto the streets of Soweto to protest against injustice. Many years down the line, it must be asked how the youth of today view June 16.

"What is that?" asks a boy of 15. A younger girl interjects: "Oh, it's the day when our youth died."

Says Erica Arosi, a 14-year-old Grade 8 pupil in central Johannesburg: "June 16th must never be forgotten."

Phindi Mtshali, a 13-year-old drama student in Johannesburg, says it's a very important day.

"It had a huge impact on our country and makes us remember our history."

Fourteen-year-old Neo Nthabeng says June 16 is about the youth "being remembered for the good we have done and not just for the bad things".

Fifteen-year-old Khuma Mananta, a Johannesburg pupil, knows the day has something to do with the Hector Petersen Memorial.

"We learn something about him being the first person to die in the uprising. So it is something to remember him by, something important for us blacks and the youth of the country."

The significance of the day remains a confusing issue among many youth, writes **Sipho Madini**

Sharline Schalkwyk, a 14-year-old pupil in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, says the day is all about empowering the youth.

"If we all work together as a collective front, then we can make this generation work and make this country a much better place."

For some, June 16 evokes images of "the struggle".

"June 16th is that thing of the struggle," says 15-year-old Thembelani January of Phoenix College.

"But it should be scrapped as a holiday because most youths do not really enjoy it like they should . . . like working hard on their school work or learning more about their history. Instead, they get up to bad and unproductive stuff, like going to bashes and drinking."

Moses Katrande, a 13-year-old pupil from Alexandra in Johannesburg, says the day brings back bad memories for some. But he quickly adds that "it must remain as a holiday because some of us need to rest on that day".

Dimakatso Molefe, an 18-year-old student at Eastdale Technical College in Bez Valley, Johannesburg, says: "It just looks like every day to me."

Since she was not even born when it all happened, she feels she can't really identify with the events of June 16.

How do the youth of yesteryear view the way June 16 is commemorated, especially considering so many of their peers went to early graves so we could enjoy the fruits of our new dispensation?

"June 16 needs a clearly defined interpretation," says 44-year-old Thabo Mokoena. "There are too many notions connected to it and it is not clear whether it is a youth thing, a political thing or a cultural thing."

Although the day is dedicated to the youth of this country, it is clear its significance is shrouded in confusion.

■ **Sipho Madini** is a freelance journalist in Johannesburg.