



## WORKS

# Reflections on the Black Consciousness Movement and the South African Revolution Selby Semela, Sam Thompson & Norman Abraham (1979)

*This is a 1979 Situationist-influenced text describing the mass student and worker protests that, in 1976 and 1977, shook apartheid South Africa with mass protests and general strikes. Written by two exiled black South Africans — Norman Abraham and Selby Semela, a leading figure in “76” — and an American revolutionary — Sam Thompson — the text is critical of hierarchical, nationalist and vanguardist modes of struggle, and affirms, instead, “the real black proletarian struggle in South Africa”.*

### 1: The 1976/77 Insurrection

*“The school for the oppressed is a revolution!”*

*Soweto pamphlet  
1976*

The manner in which the violent uprisings that swept South Africa in 1976/77 have been defined by the international spectacular society and its pseudo-opposition exposes their willful determination to misinterpret, misrepresent, and misunderstand what was a decisive event in the history of proletarian struggle in that country. Everything emanating from established circles – from the Nat regime in South Africa to the racist white man or woman on a Johannesburg street and from the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress (ANC and PAC) to pseudo-oppositional leftists the world over – has not only undermined but also distorted the events that occurred in South Africa.

For a start: what happened in South Africa cannot be encapsulated in alienated notions of time and space. It was not isolated to June of 1976. It was not restricted to Soweto. It was not merely the act of students. Nor was it simply a revolt, rebellion or unrest. It was creative revolution in the making, in the desperately clear moment of confrontation.

The events that shook the entire edifice of white South Africa, and threw into stark relief the notion of total revolution, began with relative inconspicuousness. A

