

Today, Hector Pieterson would have turned 61.

He might have been a retired engineer. A professor. A CEO. A doctor. He might have been one of us—one of the many professionals shaped by struggle, yet standing today in boardrooms, classrooms, courtrooms, and clinics, carrying the ANC's legacy forward in our work.

But he is not. Because on 16 June 1976, at just 12 years old, Hector was shot and killed by an apartheid police officer for daring to exist in defiance. For marching, unarmed, against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. For seeking the dignity of a future. The cost of that bullet was more than a boy's life. It was a life unlived.

A career never built. A family never raised. Wisdom never passed on. A mentor never there. A colleague never seated beside us. An elder not here today to tell the young ones how it was, and how it could have been.

For us, ANC professionals—those of us whose pens write policies, whose code shapes systems, whose voices lead departments and who are custodians of democratic progress—the 16th of June is not just a public holiday. It is a wound. A reminder that his insights could have refined our strategies. That his presence could have strengthened our nation. We are here because others could not be.

And so, the responsibility falls to us—not just to remember, but to build. To build a country that honours the promise of 1976. A country where children live to retire. Where resistance is not met with bullets. Where no young person's potential is squandered by a system designed to contain them.

Today we remember Hector Pieterson not as a martyr alone, but as a man he could have been.

PROFES

Sixty-one years old. Respected. Fulfilled. Still building. Let us build what he never got the chance to. **#June16 #YouthDay #HectorPieterson**