



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG  
METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

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**Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Cllr Dada Morero, remarks on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the 76 Youth Uprisings, 16 June 2016**

**His Excellency, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa,**

**Premier of Gauteng, Mr Panyaza Lesufi,**

**Ministers and Deputy Ministers,**

**Members of the Executive Council,**

**Leaders of Government,**

**Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Mr Lesetja Kganyago**

**Representatives from all the foundations ( June 16 Foundation, Tsietsi Mashinini, Each One Teach One Foundation)**

**Families of the fallen heroes and heroines of 1976,**

**Veterans of the liberation struggle,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Fellow South Africans,**

Good morning.

Welcome to Soweto.

Welcome to a place that occupies a unique position in the history of our nation and indeed in the conscience of the world. There are cities that are remembered for their monuments. There are cities that are remembered for their wealth. Johannesburg is remembered for the way ordinary people changed history here. Few places embody that truth more profoundly than Soweto.

It was here that young people, many no older than school children, confronted one of the most powerful systems of oppression ever constructed. They did not possess wealth. They did not command armies. They did not hold political offices. Yet they possessed something more powerful than all of these: the conviction that injustice could not endure forever. On the morning of 16 June 1976, thousands of young people left their classrooms and entered history.

What began as a protest against an unjust education system became a turning point in the struggle for freedom. The events of that day shattered the illusion that apartheid was permanent. They reignited resistance across our country, strengthened international solidarity, and accelerated the march towards democracy. The youth of 1976 did not simply challenge a language policy.

They challenged a system that sought to define the limits of their humanity. They declared that young people were not passive subjects of history. They were its authors. That remains one of the most important lessons of June 16. Too often, societies speak about young people as though they are merely the leaders of tomorrow.

The youth of 1976 taught us that young people can transform the present. Today, as we gather at the Hector Pieterse Memorial, we honour a generation whose courage continues to echo through time. Yet this site is not only a memorial to loss. It is a reminder of possibility. For every South African who visits this place, it asks a simple but profound question:

What will we do with the freedom for which others sacrificed so much? That question carries particular significance for Johannesburg. Ours is a city shaped by struggle and reinvention.

From the discovery of gold to the rise of segregation to the resistance movements that challenged apartheid, Johannesburg has always been a city where the future of South Africa has been contested and reimagined. The story of our city cannot be told without the story of its young people.

The students of 1976 transformed Johannesburg from a symbol of oppression into a symbol of resistance. They helped redefine Soweto from a township designed to exclude and control into a global emblem of courage, dignity and liberation. Today, the responsibility rests with us to ensure that the next chapter of Johannesburg's story is worthy of that legacy.

The struggle of this generation is different, but it is no less important. The youth of today seek quality education, meaningful work, safer communities, access to technology, economic opportunity and a fair chance to realise their potential. Their demand, like that of the generation of 1976, is fundamentally a demand for dignity. As leaders, our task is to ensure that the promise of democracy is not confined to our Constitution but is experienced in the daily lives of our people. The greatest tribute we can pay to the youth of 1976 is not found in ceremonies alone. It is found in building a South Africa where every young person can dream, create, innovate and prosper.

As we prepare to lay wreaths in honour of those who came before us, let us do so with gratitude, humility and purpose. Let us remember that the heroes of June 16 were ordinary young people who chose courage over fear. And let us recommit ourselves to building a nation that honours their sacrifice not only through remembrance, but through action. May their legacy continue to guide our country. May their courage continue to inspire our youth.

And may the spirit of June 16 forever live in the heart of Johannesburg and in the soul of our nation.  
I thank you