

Budget Debate on Vote 17: Higher Education and Training

Speech by Karabo Khakhau MP

DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

House Chairperson,

When Hector Peterson and many others bled and sacrificed their lives 47 years ago, they did so to afford young people meaningful and unobstructed access to quality education.

They did so to rid themselves of the shackles of a meaningless and oppressive education system. They did so just so to ensure that every young South African would have a fair shot at making something out of themselves. Theirs was a fight for dignity; a fight for a fair opportunity to put food on the table for themselves and their families. Theirs was a fight against generational poverty. Theirs was a fight to ensure that no student is left behind.

Sadly, President Ramaphosa's ANC "democratic" government and Minister Blade Nzimande's lack of compassion and leadership have shown us that Hector Peterson's death and every young person who died for education meant nothing. They have and continue to show us that those deaths were in vain.

How?

17 143 days later, in 2023, students remain locked out of the doors to tertiary education.

Under Minister Nzimande's watch, students have to every single year perform their poverty and desperation in order to be considered or not for access through these doors.

Minister, under your leadership, poor students wake up and go to bed hungry in dilapidated residences praying that the roof doesn't fall on their heads while making friends with resident rats and cockroaches. Under your leadership, students spend every day anxious about when those financial and academic exclusion letters and eviction notices will land in their mail because NSFAS either has no record of their application (suddenly), is not sure if it'll still be able to fund them or whatever other ridiculous excuse they are able to think of. All while the same entity enjoys a monthly million rand's rental of office spaces overlooking the ocean.

Under your leadership, TVETs are treated like unwanted stepchildren with poor funding for basic necessities such as up-to-date and labour market-relevant curriculum for academic offerings such as mechatronics, Wi-Fi, workable and disability friendly infrastructure, back-up

generators to save students from the enemy of our progress that is load-shedding, and safety in and around campuses to protect us from being raped and murdered by modern-day vultures. Under your leadership, tertiary qualifications are sold to the highest bidder while you turn a blind and actively sweep matters under the carpet.

So, one thing is clear: Minister Nkomo and the ANC government do not care about our futures.

Dignity for students is an unimaginable offering for you. You do not care about what it means for a poor young person in South Africa who is their family's only shot out of poverty to get that qualification.

To you, Hector Peterson and everyone's death are mere history stories that mean nothing to your conscience and oath to serve. You simply do not care! You never did! Students and young people deserve better.