



# Chris Hani

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**Chris Hani**, born **Martin Thembisile Hani** (28 June 1942 – 10 April 1993)<sup>[1]</sup> was the leader of the [South African Communist Party](#) and chief of staff of [Umkhonto we Sizwe](#), the armed wing of the [African National Congress](#) (ANC). He was a fierce opponent of the [apartheid](#) government. He was [assassinated](#) on 10 April 1993.

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## Early life<sup>[edit]</sup>

Thembisile Hani was born on 28 June 1942<sup>[1]</sup> in the small town of [Cofimvaba](#), in a rural [Xhosa](#) village called kuSabalele, in the then [Transkei](#). He was the fifth of six children. He attended [Lovedale](#) school in 1957, to finish his last two years. He twice finished two school grades in a single year. When Hani was 12 years old, after hearing his father explanations about apartheid and the [African National Congress](#), he wished to join the ANC but was still too young to be accepted.<sup>[2]</sup> In Lovedale school, Hani joined the ANC Youth League when he was 15 years old, even though political activities were not allowed at black schools under apartheid. He influenced other students to join the ANC.<sup>[2]</sup>

In 1959, at the [University of Fort Hare](#) in [Alice, Eastern Cape](#), Hani studied English, Latin<sup>[2]</sup> and modern and classical literature.<sup>[3]</sup> He did not participate in any sport, saying "I would rather fight apartheid than play sport".<sup>[2]</sup> Hani, in an interview on the Wankie campaign, mentioned that he was a Rhodes University graduate.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Political and military career<sup>[edit]</sup>

At age 15 he joined the ANC Youth League. As a student he was active in protests against the [Bantu Education Act](#). Following his graduation, he joined [Umkhonto we Sizwe](#) (MK), the armed wing of the

ANC. Following his arrest under the [Suppression of Communism Act](#), he went into exile in [Lesotho](#) in 1963.<sup>[3]</sup> Because of Hani's involvement with Umkhonto we Sizwe he was forced into hiding by the South African government during which time he changed his first name to Chris.<sup>[3]</sup>

He received military training in the [Soviet Union](#) and served in campaigns in the [Zimbabwean War of Liberation](#), also called the Rhodesian Bush War. They were joint operations between [Umkhonto we Sizwe](#) (MK) and the [Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army](#) in the late 1960s. The Luthuli Detachment operation consolidated Hani's reputation as a soldier in the black army that took the field against apartheid and its allies. His role as a fighter from the earliest days of MK's exile (following the arrest of [Nelson Mandela](#) and the other internal MK leaders at [Rivonia](#)) was an important part in the fierce loyalty Hani enjoyed in some quarters later as MK's commander. In 1969 he produced and signed, with six others, the 'Hani Memorandum' which was strongly critical of the leadership of [Joe Modise](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

In Lesotho he organised guerrilla operations of the MK in South Africa. By 1982, Hani had become prominent enough that he was the target of assassination attempts, and he eventually moved to the ANC's headquarters in [Lusaka](#), [Zambia](#). As head of Umkhonto we Sizwe, he was responsible for the suppression of a mutiny by dissident anti-Communist ANC members in detention camps, but denied any role in abuses including torture and murder.<sup>[3]</sup>

Having spent time as a clandestine organiser in South Africa in the mid-1970s, he permanently returned to South Africa following the unbanning of the ANC in 1990, and took over from [Joe Slovo](#) as head of the [South African Communist Party](#) on the 8 December 1991.<sup>[6]</sup> He supported the suspension of the ANC's armed struggle in favour of negotiations.<sup>[7]</sup>

## **Assassination**<sup>[edit]</sup>

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Chris Hani was [assassinated](#) on 10 April 1993 outside his home in [Dawn Park](#), a racially mixed suburb of [Boksburg](#). He was accosted by a Polish far-right anti-communist immigrant named [Janusz Waluś](#), who shot him in the head and back as he stepped out of his car. Waluś fled the scene, but was arrested soon afterwards after Hani's neighbour, a white Afrikaner woman, called the police. [Clive Derby-Lewis](#), a senior South African [Conservative Party](#) M.P. and [Shadow Minister](#) for Economic Affairs at the time, who had lent Waluś his pistol, was also arrested for complicity in Hani's murder.<sup>[8]</sup> The Conservative Party of South Africa (*Konserwatiewe Party van Suid-Afrika*) had broken away from the ruling [National Party](#) out of opposition to the reforms of P.W. Botha. After the elections of 1989, it was the second-strongest party in the [House of Assembly](#), after the [NP](#), and opposed [F. W. de Klerk](#)'s dismantling of [apartheid](#).

Historically, the assassination is seen as a turning point. Serious tensions followed the assassination, with fears that the country would erupt in violence. [Nelson Mandela](#) addressed the nation appealing for calm, in a speech regarded as 'presidential' even though he was not yet president of the country.<sup>[9]</sup>

*Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, this assassin. The cold-blooded murder of Chris Hani has sent shock waves throughout the country and the world. ... Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for – the freedom of all of us.*

While riots did follow the assassination,<sup>[8]</sup> the two sides of the negotiation process were galvanised into action, and they soon agreed that democratic elections should take place on 27 April 1994, just over a year after Hani's assassination.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Assassins' conviction and amnesty hearing<sup>[edit]</sup>

Both Janusz Waluś and Clive Derby-Lewis were sentenced to death for the murder. Clive Derby-Lewis's wife [Gaye Derby-Lewis](#), also a senior Conservative Party figure, was acquitted. The two men's sentences were commuted to life imprisonment when the death penalty was abolished as a result of a Constitutional Court ruling in 1995.

Hani's killers appeared before the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), claiming political motivation for their crimes and applying for amnesty on the basis that they had acted on the orders of the Conservative Party. The Hani family was represented by anti-apartheid lawyer [George Bizos](#).<sup>[10]</sup> Their applications were denied when the TRC ruled that they were not acting on orders.<sup>[11]</sup> After several failed attempts to get medical parole, in May 2015 Derby-Lewis was granted medical parole after being diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. On 10 March 2016, the North Gauteng High Court of South Africa ordered that Waluś be released on parole and given bail conditions.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Conspiracy theories surrounding assassination<sup>[edit]</sup>

Hani's assassination has attracted numerous conspiracy theories about outside involvement. The final report of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), however, said that it "was unable to find evidence that the two murderers convicted of the killing of Chris Hani took orders from international groups, security forces or from higher up in the right-wing echelons."<sup>[13]</sup>

## Influence<sup>[edit]</sup>

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Hani was a charismatic leader, with significant support among the radical anti-apartheid youth. At the time of his death, he was the most popular ANC leader after [Nelson Mandela](#), and was sometimes perceived as a rival to the more moderate party leadership.<sup>[14]</sup> Following the legalisation of the ANC, Hani's support for the negotiation process with the apartheid government was critical in keeping the militants in line.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Honours<sup>[edit]</sup>

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In 1993, French [philosopher Jacques Derrida](#) dedicated *Spectres de Marx* (1993) to Hani.<sup>[15]</sup>

In 1997, Baragwanath Hospital, one of the largest hospitals in the world, was renamed the [Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital](#) in his memory.<sup>[16]</sup>

In September 2004, Hani was voted 20th in the controversial Top 100 [Greatest South Africans](#) poll.

Days after his assassination, the rock group [Dave Matthews Band](#) (whose lead singer and guitarist, [Dave Matthews](#), is from South Africa) began playing on what would become [#36](#). The first version contained lyrics about Hani's shooting. Later versions, Hani was on Matthews' mind, and the repeated line "Hani, Hani, come and dance with me" became the chorus of the song. Later, Matthews believed the song to be too cheery for the subject matter, so he changed it to "Honey." A live favorite for years, the music evolved into the basic foundation of the 2001 single, "Everyday". The introduction to the

song in this latter form, a popular hit in 2001, starts with the crowd singing the "Honey" line, and the crowd and band occasionally use the reprise as an outro to the song as well.<sup>[17][18]</sup>

A short opera Hani by composer [Bongani Ndodana-Breen](#) with libretto by film producer [Mfundu Vundla](#) was commissioned by [Cape Town Opera](#) and [University of Cape Town](#) premiering at the [Baxter Theatre](#) 21 November 2010.<sup>[19][20]</sup>

A [township](#) on the outskirts of [Pietermaritzburg](#), [KwaZulu Natal](#), is named "Haniville" in his honour.

One of the District Municipalities in the Eastern Cape was named the [Chris Hani District Municipality](#). This district includes [Queenstown](#), [Cofimvaba](#) and [Lady Frere](#).

An all-male residence at [Rhodes University](#) in [Grahamstown](#) (Eastern Cape, South Africa) is named after Hani. The residence was opened in 2008 and accommodates 73 students.

The [University of the Western Cape](#) also named a residence after him.

In 2009, after extension of [Cape Town's Central Line](#), the new terminus serving eastern areas of [Khayelitsha](#) was christened [Chris Hani](#).<sup>[21]</sup>

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