



**FW de Klerk**  
FOUNDATION

## **SUBMISSION TO THE SAHRC ON RACISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

The FW de Klerk Foundation has responded in the affirmative to a call for submissions by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) on Racism and Social Media in South Africa, with hearings scheduled for 15 and 16 February 2017.

The largely positive relations between people are disrupted by jarring and painful incidents that have the prospect, through the ease of use of social media to go viral and stir up deep emotions - as has been evident more recently. The Foundation is not contesting the use of social media in its submission, it is the use of racist and abusive terminology to describe other people that is at the core of the argument. Such incidents clearly set the agenda back significantly and have the effect of polarising people.

The Foundation strongly asserts that any and all racist references must be treated equally and uncompromisingly and racism is not limited to one race group but has its invidious presence amongst black and white. Disdain, disrespect and disregard for any race group deserves in equal measure, condemnation and the response of both the law and education (including remedial education).

The Foundation has already commented on the recent publication of the *Prevention and Combating of the Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill*. It has submitted a very detailed critique of the proposed Bill and asserts that while hate speech has no place in our constitutional democracy, it is calling for a fundamental reconsideration of this Bill, particularly in relation to the possible criminalisation of free speech.

The opportunity afforded to a large swathe of civil society, business and government to make submissions to the SAHRC is bound to be robust. An acknowledgement of the richness of our diversity, as opposed to divisive identity politics that leads to mistrust and hate, clearly formed the basis of negotiations and the birth of the Constitution. The Foundation is of the view that this spirit must continue to guide us.

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