

# Message from the editor

**Robin Sewlal**

Prior to 1994, the media operated in an environment that can best be described as 'suppressed'. Diversity of thoughts, views and opinions on media platforms were non-existent as the regime, at the time, ruled with an iron-fist. A variety of print media outlets sought to reflect reality, but it was a steady struggle especially for those with meagre resources, and exacerbated by the constant clampdowns. The state-run broadcaster, if anything, entrenched discriminatory principles and practices. Given our precarious past, the birth of democracy proved to be the perfect panacea for a promising pathway for the media fraternity. Transformation, in more ways than one, permeated the sector. *Reflections of the South African Media: 1994-2019* is a compilation by authors who have peculiar insight of and excelled in the different areas of the fast-developing industry in the first 25 years of South Africa's democracy. And they are no ordinary authors. Every chapter contributed came from women and men who had, through the years, a direct link with ML Sultan Technikon, Technikon Natal, Durban Institute of Technology (DIT) or Durban University of Technology (DUT)\* either as a student, lecturer, visiting professor, speaker or associate. Compiling and editing this book has been an incredibly invigorating experience. It was never in doubt whose image will

adorn the cover of the book, so it was beautifully uplifting that many authors, not knowing my choice, gave Nelson Mandela due recognition. My brief to the authors was simple: let me have your personal lookback in your own style on the topic that you are most comfortable with. All of them stepped up to the plate, and the vast array of content in the book bares strong testimony. A section titled *Journeys in Journalism* encapsulates input from alumni of DUT Journalism – they were afforded free reign to trace the territory they traversed. I'm indebted to each and every contributor for generously volunteering their precious time and talent to the book. They were simply magnificent. It has to be said that this publication far exceeded my expectations as it, initially, was a humble idea to celebrate 25 years of the media industry with a handful of contributions. Little did I realise that my desk will be flooded with 40 pieces of excellence and a Foreword penned by the brilliant Jeremy Thompson. My eternal gratitude must also be extended to the small team of assistants for understanding my vision upfront and rallying remarkably throughout.

Once you've enjoyed the read, I invite you to share *Reflections of the South African Media: 1994-2019* with whoever you believe can benefit from its rich and diverse content!

\*The technikons merged in 2002 to form DIT which later became DUT



Robin Sewlal is an advocate of the High Court of South Africa and associate director at DUT Journalism, Durban University of Technology. He is the legal representative of the Institutional Research Ethics Committee, chairs the Senate Rules Committee and serves on various other forums at the university. Robin has extensive experience in both the print and electronic media, and commenced freelance work with The Leader newspaper and Capital Radio. He was the chairperson of the International Radiocracy Conference in 2001. Comprising radio, democracy and development, *Radiocracy* is a key fabric of society. Robin was the chairperson of the board at the King Dinuzulu Hospital, and contributed as a board member to various organisations. Some other roles were as a commissioner at the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), convenor and judge of the Vodacom Journalist of the Year competition, and KwaZulu-Natal convenor of the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef). Robin has edited several publications.