

The New South Africa

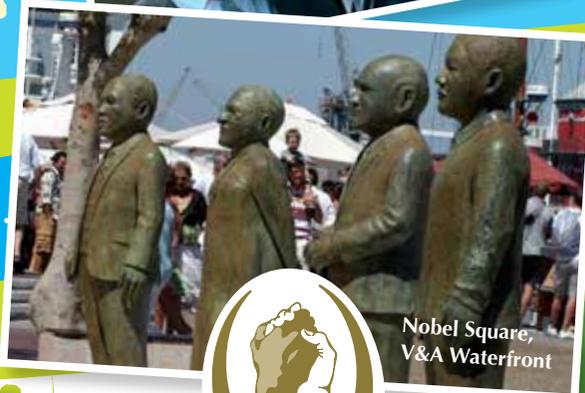
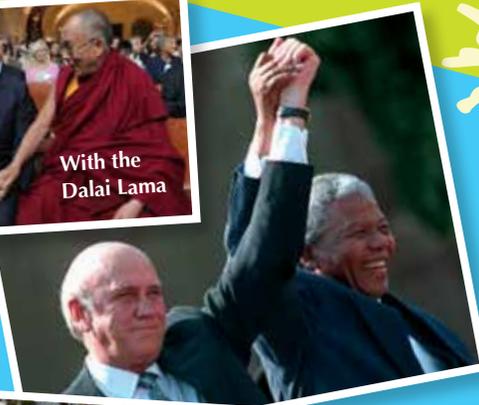
After South Africa's first non-racial election on 27 April 1994 Nelson Mandela was elected President and FW de Klerk became one of two Deputy Presidents in the Government of National Unity (GNU).⁴

De Klerk served as Deputy President until June 1996 when he withdrew the NP from the GNU. He retired from politics in 1997.

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With the Dalai Lama



Nobel Square,
V&A Waterfront



FW de Klerk FOUNDATION

Address: Zeezicht Building,
Tygerberg Park,
163 Uys Krige Drive,
Platteklouf, 7500,
South Africa

Telephone: +27 21 930 3622
Fax: +27 21 930 3898
E-mail: info@fwdeklerk.org

www.fwdeklerk.org
facebook.com/FWdeKlerkFoun
twitter.com/FWdeKlerkFoun

FW DE KLERK

Youth and Education

Frederik Willem (FW) de Klerk was born into a deeply political family on 18 March 1936 in Johannesburg. His father, Jan de Klerk, was a Cabinet Minister and his uncle, JG Strijdom, was Prime Minister from 1954 to 1958.

FW de Klerk was educated at Monument High School in Krugersdorp and at Potchefstroom University - where he obtained a law degree in 1958.

He was involved in student politics and at one time arranged a meeting between students and Chief Albert Luthuli, the President of the ANC.

Life After Politics

In 1999 FW de Klerk published his autobiography and established the FW de Klerk Foundation. The Foundation is dedicated to upholding the Constitution and to working for positive relations between South Africa's communities.

In 2004 he established the Global Leadership Foundation in Europe. The GLF has a panel of more than 30 former statesmen who discreetly help countries experiencing transitional problems.



Politics

FW de Klerk became a successful lawyer in Vereeniging. In 1972 he decided to go into politics and won a by-election to become the National Party (NP) Member of Parliament (MP) for Vereeniging.

As a young man, De Klerk was committed to Afrikaner nationalism. He supported Prime Minister Verwoerd's vision of leading the nine black homelands to full independence - but wanted the homelands to be given more land.

Later, De Klerk realised that 'separate development' could not solve South Africa's complex problems - and had led to unacceptable injustice for black, coloured and Indian South Africans.

Cabinet Minister

FW de Klerk was appointed to Prime Minister John Vorster's Cabinet in January 1978 and served as a Minister in various portfolios for 11 years. In 1982 he was elected as the NP's Transvaal leader.

De Klerk supported President PW Botha's reform policies, which by 1986 had repealed more than 100 apartheid laws. He was deeply involved in intense leadership discussions regarding the need for constitutional change.

On 2 February 1989 after PW Botha's surprise resignation, he was elected Leader of the National Party. In his first speech as leader he said that his goal was *"a totally changed South Africa... a South Africa free of domination or oppression in any form..."*

President

After he became President on 20 September 1989 De Klerk dedicated his presidency to the ending of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial constitutional democracy. He immediately began to normalise politics by allowing demonstrations and by releasing prominent ANC prisoners. On 13 December 1989 he held his first secret meeting with Nelson Mandela.¹



Constitutional Transformation

On 2 February 1990 President De Klerk announced the unbanning of all political parties and the release of Nelson Mandela.² He called for negotiations on a new non-racial constitution.

CODESA

Constitutional negotiations began on 20 December 1991 at the Congress for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA).

After the National Party lost some by-elections, the rightwing Conservative Party claimed that De Klerk could no longer negotiate on behalf of white South Africans. De Klerk called a white referendum, which he won with a 69% majority.

Although CODESA made substantial progress, the negotiations were seriously undermined by violence. In June 1992 the ANC withdrew from CODESA and embarked on 'rolling mass action' that brought South Africa to the brink of chaos.

However, on 26 September 1992 the Government and the ANC decided to resume negotiations. Agreement was reached on an Interim Constitution, which was adopted by Parliament on 22 December 1993.

On 10 December 1993 Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.³

