



## Statement

### **The dilemma of institutions and political parties platforming bigotry: The case of the EFF, UCT and Prof Lumumba**

It has been reported that the Economic Freedom Front (EFF) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) will go ahead with plans to platform Kenyan scholar Professor Patrick Lumumba for the EFF's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in July. This decision has caused uproar among students, staff and the public due to Lumumba's recent praise for the anti-LGBTIQ+ law in Uganda and his disparagement of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Lumumba stated in an interview to DigiTalk TV that he is a homophobe and that the LGBTIQ+ community is ["sick" and in need of being "cured"](#). He has tweeted congratulations to Uganda President Yoweri Museveni for signing into law the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 which threatens the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality". The EFF — following their earlier march in support of LGBTIQ+ rights and persons in Uganda — stated that the lecture was planned months ahead before his comments and that this platform would be an opportunity to [hopefully change his mind](#).

Lumumba's comments are clearly bigotry and border on hate speech if he is threatening prison or even the death penalty for members of the LGBTQI+ community. He can certainly be said to be spreading harmful – even dangerous - disinformation. This begs the question: should he be given or denied a platform? What are the obligations of the EFF and UCT if he uses their platform to spread hate speech or disinformation or encourage discrimination?

Academic institutions are designed to be safe spaces for the diversity of opinions and can only operate effectively if they allow for the full range of diverse opinions, no matter how offensive these may be. But these same academic institutions also have a duty and obligation to protect those on campus, as well as to fight disinformation. We would encourage maximum freedom of speech on campus, including anything Lumumba has to say that falls short of hate speech or the threat of violence. But hate speech, discrimination and disinformation should not go unchallenged.

Students and staff are allowed to exercise their right to protest against Lumumba and his views. And we hope they do so. The event is likely to test UCT's capacity to find the balance between allowing free speech and abhorring hate speech, discrimination and disinformation.

EFF's position is different, as it is a political party choosing who it associates with and what views it wishes to promote. We are keen to see how they intend to change Lumumba's views, or at least show if they truly abhor hate speech and disinformation.

\*The Campaign for Free Expression is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation that defends and promotes free expression for all across southern Africa.

Contact: Thokozani Mbwana, Project Manager

[thokozani@freeexpression.org.za](mailto:thokozani@freeexpression.org.za)

087 163 3567