

# Singular conduct saluted

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**The University of the Free State (UFS) has recognised two esteemed South Africans, Archbishop Cecil Thabo Makgoba and Prof. Abdool Karim, for strides made in their respective fields and positive, impactful legacies.**

The university has conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Theology (Honoris Causa) to Makgoba and a PhD in Medical Virology (h.c.) to Karim as part of its autumn graduation ceremonies. Makgoba was bestowed the honorary degree at the Qwaqwa campus on 12 April, and Karim at the Bloemfontein campus on Thursday, 18 April.

The UFS recognised Makgoba for his strong advocacy against corruption, the abuse of power, and unwavering commitment to justice and ethical leadership.

The university stated that the honorary Doctor of Theology degree was awarded on the grounds that include exceptional achievements of public service in accordance with the ideals and principles of the UFS, adding that the recognition resonates with Makgoba's remarkable journey of resilience and unwavering commitment to uplifting communities, dedicating his life to fostering social justice, education, and spiritual guidance.

The UFS stated that Makgoba's journey from the streets of apartheid-era South Africa to the helm of the Anglican Church stands as a testament to the power of resilience, education, and service. The institute stressed that he continues to



**Prof. Salim S Abdool Karim (left, honorary doctorate recipient) with Prof. Gert van Zyl (dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences) during a ceremony at the University of the Free State's campus in Bloemfontein on Thursday.** PHOTO: UFS

champion social justice and equality, and that his legacy resonates with hope and can serve as an inspiration for generations to come.

In his acceptance speech, Makgoba stressed the relevance of theology in addressing contemporary societal issues. Drawing upon the doctrine of the incarnation, he emphasised the divine solidarity with humanity, urging a renewed commitment to social justice and equality.

Recognition by the UFS adds to the long list of honours to Makgoba. They include, among others, honorary doctorates from the General Theological Seminary, New York; the Huron University College, Ontario; the University of the South, Tennessee; the University of Witwatersrand (Wits); and the Stellenbosch University (SU).

Karim's recognition is for his ground-breaking research in Aids and Covid-19. A clinical infectious disease epidemiologist, he also shared with graduates the last 20 years of his academic journey an example to illustrate how exciting the acquisition

of knowledge and thrill of discovery can be. Last year, he said, there were 1.3 million new infections and over 700 000 deaths as a result of Aids.

"We enrolled hundreds of young women without HIV and provided them with all kinds of knowledge to try and keep them HIV-free. Amongst them was participant 256, a young lady, and she acquired an HIV infection two years later in 2005.

"It would later turn out that this young woman, code named Caprisa 256, has a very special antibody – the kind that can kill a wide range of HIV – which is referred to as a broadly neutralising antibody. It is an antibody researchers tried to elicit in making a vaccine. It turned out that not only is her antibody able to kill a wide range of HIV, it is a highly potent antibody. After testing and cloning a cell in the blood and growing it in a culture and harvesting the antibody, it was genetically manipulated to get a better antibody," explained Karim.

Prof. Francis Petersen, vice-chancellor and principal of the UFS, congratulated Karim on his honorary degree and praised his groundbreaking research.

"Prof. Abdool Karim led the South African response to Covid-19, providing us as the public, as well as the government, with scientific advice on the virus, new variants, and flattening the curve.

"His ability to easily explain complex science to members of the general public in such a way that they are able to understand it. He played a critical role during the pandemic, and for this, as well as for his research on Aids, South Africa is indebted to him."