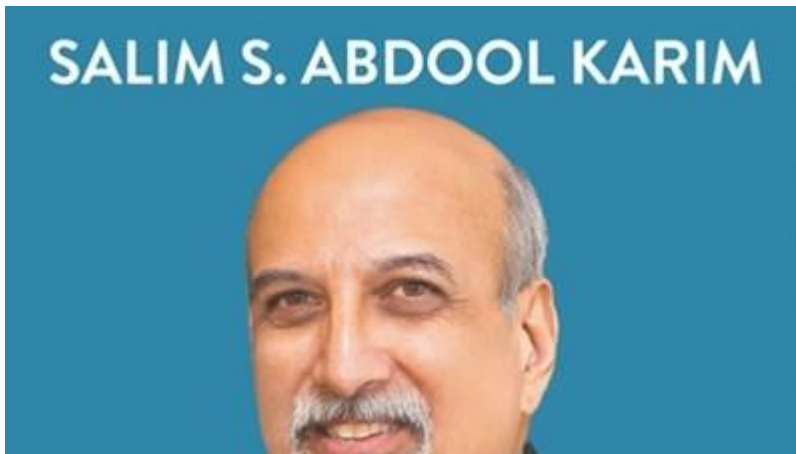


Read of the Week: Standing Up for Science - A Voice of Reason

— OLEBOGENG MOTSE Thu, 20 Jul 2023



Standing up for Science: A Voice of Reason which is written by esteemed scientist Prof Salim Abdool Karim provides an in-depth behind-the-scenes account of South Africa's battle against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prof Abdool Karim tells the [OFM Business Hour](#) that he hopes the book which is our *read of the week* will show the importance of science in society and provide a template on how to effectively deal with tomorrow's pandemic. Furthermore Karim says his intention with the book is to show South Africans the importance of "standing together to defeat pandemics. It doesn't help being divided because the virus wins" the renowned epidemiologist warns.

Listen to the interview here:

<https://iono.fm/e/1333690?fbclid=IwAR1OQ1sdAOnQmev82JzL5rMRywwPmsi0CYe1srSTLAtid5Pf0OnWbJCzyw>

Covid-19 denialism

[Prof Abdool Karim](#) says prior to Covid -19 he was used to dealing with denialism, something he became acquainted with when carrying out his HIV/AIDS research. The one thing he did not see coming was how pervasive Covid-19 denialism would be thanks to social media which he describes as an echo chamber. The denialism soon turned into personal attacks created out of blatant lies.

ALSO READ: #OwnYourLife - Professor Salim Abdool Karim

On whether these personal attacks contributed to him resigning as co-chair of the Covid-19 ministerial advisory committee (MAC), Abdool Karim says no. He stresses that he wanted to dedicate his time to his HIV/AIDS research, which was falling off the rails owing to his commitments not just to the Covid-19 fight in South Africa, but also abroad where he was regularly giving talks.

South Africa admired for Covid-19 science

The former co-chair of the Covid-19 ministerial advisory committee (MAC) says what he learned from travelling to the United Kingdom (UK) and appearing before the United States (US) Congress amongst other notable experiences during the pandemic, is that the world looked to South Africa as an example for reducing peaks of the virus. The country had surveillance systems in place to identify the [Beta and Omicron variants](#) of the virus.

Covid-19 is not behind us

“We’re still living within the pandemic. Each day we still have several hundred deaths from Covid-19 reported across the world. So there is no question, we are still living within the pandemic. Our big concern is will we see a new variant? Because if we see a new variant, we’ll see a new wave” warns Prof Abdool Karim.

He says whilst each passing day makes a new variant less likely, scientists are still on the alert.

"SALIMS. ABDOOL KARIM, FRS, is a South African clinical infectious diseases epidemiologist who is widely recognised for his scientific contributions to AIDS and Covid-19. He serves as a Special Adviser on pandemics to the Director[1]General of the World Health Organization (WHO). Abdool Karim is the Director of the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) and CAPRISA Professor of Global Health at Columbia University. He is an Adjunct Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at Harvard University, Adjunct Professor of Medicine at Cornell University and Pro Vice[1]Chancellor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is a Vice-President of the International Science Council and serves as a member of the WHO Science Council and the Advisory Board of Physicians for Human Rights. Abdool Karim is a board member of the New England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet Global Health and The Lancet HIV. He is a member of the US National Academy of Medicine and The World Academy of Science, and a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS)"- Pan Macmillan