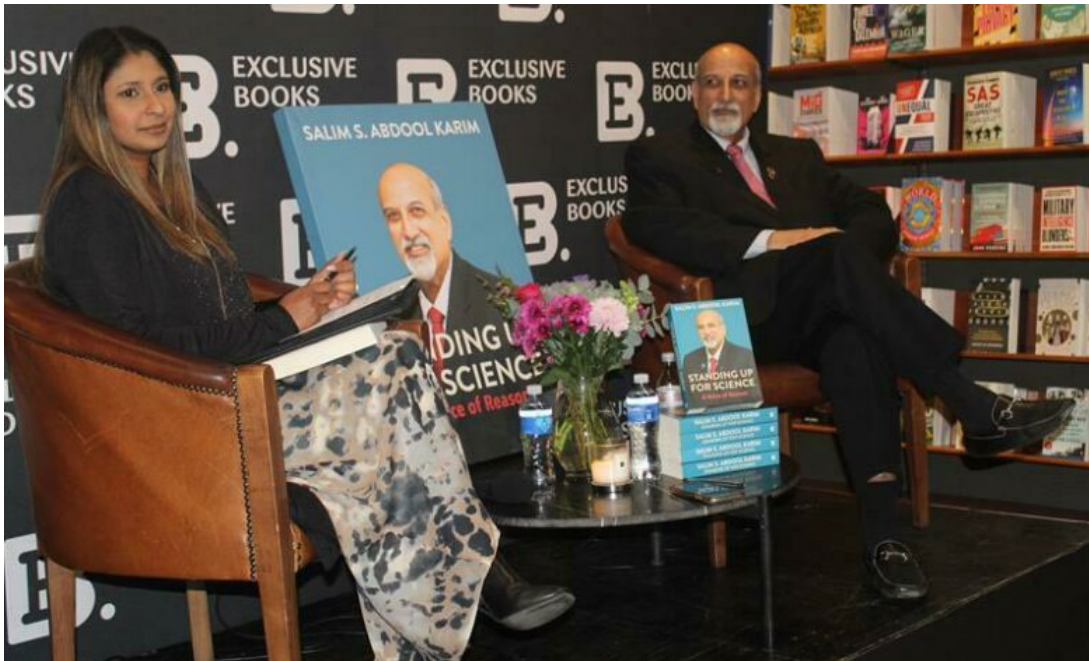


Standing Up for Science book launched in Hyde Park

Exclusive Books in Hyde Park welcomed people to the launch of the book Standing Up for Science by Prof. Salim S Abdool Karim.

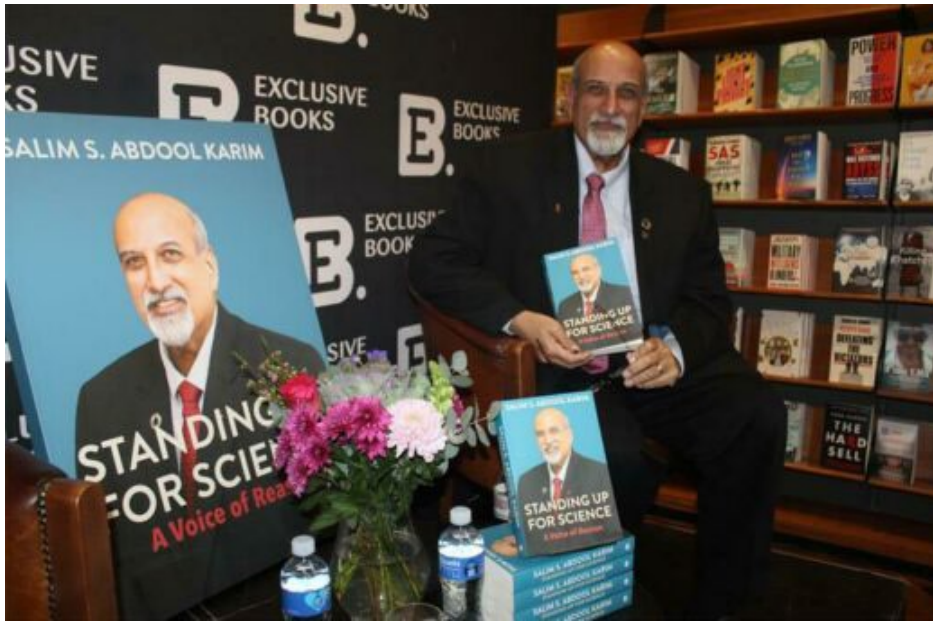
Naidine Sibanda



Media personality and author Joanne Joseph converses with Professor Salim S Abdool Karim about his book. Photo: Naidine Sibanda

An informative narrative about the enduring value of science is found in Professor Salim S Abdool Karim's new book. The book Standing Up for Science was launched at Exclusive Books in Hyde Park on July 6. At the launch, Karim conversed with media personality and author Joanne Joseph about the book which gives insight into what it was like to be at the forefront of a pandemic. Joseph introduced Karim as a 'global thought leader in science and health and special advisor on pandemics to the director general of the World Health Organisation' among other titles.

Karim said his love for science was stimulated by his high school maths and physics teachers. "This was so much so that I arranged with my physics teacher that I would go after school and we would have 30-minute meetings three times a week where we would talk about science outside of the curriculum," he said.



Professor Salim S Abdool Karim's launched his new book Standing Up for Science. Photo: Naidine Sibanda

The professor added he became embroiled in the whole South African Aids denial issue in 1987/88. He said Aids denialism in the country was ratcheted up several notches because it became official government policy which was based on a fundamental anti-science viewpoint based on denialism. It came to the fore at the Aids conference in 2000. Karim believes now science was in a stronger position because 'there is nothing like adversity to build resilience and strength'. "That resilience we developed during the struggle against Aids, we were not alone. A variety of organisations stood on the frontline and took on this challenge. The scientists needed to stand up and be counted. It happened for a lot of us and as the science community, we were much stronger when it came to Covid-19."

When Covid-19 arrived, he and his team started testing for the virus a week or two before the first case. When he became part of the National Coronavirus Command Council, he guided the trajectory of the virus and made people understand the underlying science. Karim said within days of the lockdown, the government was in court because people wanted to selfishly explore their rights and freedom. "If we were, however, willing to be selfless, we could control the virus. The government was infringing on your freedoms for some communal good. In my view, these were short-term rights we were willing to withhold for the greater good. If we follow that principle, I believe we will do well in the pandemics to come."