



## PhD graduate Safura Abdool Karim joins parents in the hall of fame in academic achievement



Both her parents, professors Quarraisha Abdool Karim and Salim Abdool Karim flank daughter Dr Safura Abdool Karim who was conferred a Doctor of Philosophy in Law during the UKZN's Autumn Graduation ceremonies. Picture Abhi Indrarajan

**Durban — Child of renowned KwaZulu-Natal professors, Quarraisha Abdool Karim and Salim Abdool Karim, followed in her parents' footsteps when she graduated Doctor of Philosophy in Law from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).**

Dr Safura Abdool Karim was one of the graduates during the UKZN's Autumn Graduation ceremonies.

Her parents obtained their PhDs at the then-University of Natal. Leading in HIV and Aids research, they also contributed heavily to the country's Covid-19 policies and research globally.

"We are a family of public health enthusiasts, both of my parents are epidemiologists who focus on infectious diseases, and my two siblings also work in health-related spaces: my sister is a health journalist and my brother did his honours in genomic sequencing" Abdool Karim said.

After completing her LLM at Georgetown University in Washington, influenced substantially by the chance to be supervised by UKZN's Professor David McQuoid-Mason, founder of South Africa's Street Law programme, she joined her parents' alma mater to complete her PhD studies.

Titled: Developing and Applying a Constitutional Right-Based Approach to the Regulation of the Modifiable Risk Factors for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD's) in South Africa, Abdool Karim aimed to use her research to develop content on healthcare and sufficient food rights to identify obligations that could support action on NCD prevention.

"This thesis seeks to develop an HR-based approach to NCDs under the rubric of the South African Constitution," Abdool Karim said.

"At the moment, my pathway to doing this is to help change the food landscape to make healthy eating more accessible to everyone and address the way corporations are damaging people's health."

The abrupt shift in public health at the beginning of the pandemic also encouraged Abdool Karim to include communicable diseases in her research more which led to different organisations, including the Africa Centre for Disease Control seeking her input. She has also been strongly involved in advocating for change, advising on issues and policies on Covid-19 vaccine equity.

"A lot of work I did around Covid-19 ended up being very relevant to my PhD and to NCD's work – excitingly it pushed me into new directions around developing a right to public health more broadly which I have continued to work on even after finishing my PhD," Abdool Karim said.

At present, Abdool Karim is a part-time academic and a newly minted practising advocate at the Bridge Group of Advocates, she said her next step is to take up a postdoctoral fellowship at the Oxford-John Hopkins Global Infectious Disease Ethics Collaborative later this year.

"I am looking forward to spending some time focusing on developing my scholarship as a full-time academic," Abdool Karim said.