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# Honour for top HIV expert

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ONE of the world's leading HIV-Aids researchers, with pioneering contributions in understanding the evolving epidemic, while also fighting for the rights of those affected by it, Quarraisha Abdool Karim was recently honoured with an honorary doctorate by the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

The degree was bestowed on Prof Karim during UJ's second series of graduation ceremonies at the Auckland Park Kingsway campus.

"With extensive research contributions that spans more than 25 years, Prof Abdool Karim's commitment to create a deeper understanding of the growing HIV epidemic in South Africa and the factors influencing acquisition of HIV infection in adolescent girls, is evident with worldwide acknowledgments of her work," the executive dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at UJ, Prof Andre Swart said.

"Prof Karim is the embodiment of a true South African ambassador, in the context of both traditional and modern Africa," Prof Swart said

"Her work has had a profound impact on HIV treatment and prevention policies at a national and global level. The conferral of the honorary doctoral degree is in recognition of her work that has contributed greatly towards improving the quality of life of women in Africa."

Abdool Karim holds a professorship in clinical epidemiology from the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, US and is an honorary professor in public health at the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

She is a visiting scientist at Massachusetts General Hospital and visiting lecturer at Harvard University. Since 1998 Abdool Karim has played a cen-



**ACADEMIC ACCOLADE:** Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim. PICTURE: UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

tral role in building the science base in southern Africa through the Columbia University-Southern African Fogarty Aids international training and research programme that has trained more than 600 scientists in the region.

She was the principal investigator of the landmark Caprisa 004 Tenofovir Gel trial, which provided proof of concept for microbicides, highlighted by science as one of the top 10 scientific breakthroughs in 2010.

Abdool Karim has published extensively and has authored several books and book chapters, and is a NRF A-rated researcher.

"I am deeply humbled and honoured to receive an honorary degree from the University of Johannesburg, one of South Africa's leading and most respected public universities," Abdool Karim said on receiving the doctorate.

"I accept the honorary doctorate on behalf of women in Africa who are unwavering in their hope that HIV will be controlled and eradicated through innovative research and the development of effective medical technologies and who are contributing to knowledge

generation either by leading research teams, participating in research and advocating for the betterment of women's lives. They inspire me to persist with my scientific endeavours. While some progress has been made, much more remains to be done to ensure a just society," she said.

For her contributions to the domain of HIV prevention and treatment, Abdool Karim was also awarded the 2016 L'Oréal-Unesco for Women in Science Award, naming her as one of five "exceptional laureates" for her remarkable activities and contributions related to HIV in South Africa and the African continent.

For this award, nominations were received from 2600 leading scientists across the globe. President of the jury and Nobel laureate Prof Elizabeth Blackburn, in congratulating the winners, said that: "The 2016 laureates bring an extraordinary vision and immediate solutions to major health issues. All their careers are exceptional, their discoveries truly new and they epitomise top-level research."

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