

Desmond Tutu HIV Centre and Health Foundation mourns the passing of beloved patron

The executive, Board and team at the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre and Health Foundation are deeply saddened by the loss of their patron and supporter, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, in Cape Town.



Source: Supplied

The Archbishop and Mama Leah Tutu became patrons of the centre and foundation in August 2004. Since that time, their support has been inspirational to the work of the organisation and their values of compassion, excellence, integrity, respect, progress and innovation have been fundamental to the ongoing work of the organisations.

Prof. Linda-Gail Bekker, Director of the HIV Centre and the Executive Officer of the Health Foundation, said: "The Arch constantly reminded us that we are all God's children and have value. He reminded us that every act of kindness helped to wipe the tears from God's face. We will greatly miss his indomitable spirit but every day his memory challenges us to better serve those in need."

The Archbishop's unyielding stance on the importance of human rights; including the right to healthcare for all people regardless of ideology, sexual preference, race, ethnicity, social status or condition; has been a guiding principle. He remained true to his unshakeable belief in the rainbow nation and encouraged all South Africans to serve and support the marginalised, including those living with HIV and Tuberculosis.

In the early part of the rollout of HIV treatment, he was a strong protagonist for equitable access to care, vigorously denounced the AIDS denialism rife at the time and called the stigmatization and exclusion of people living with HIV a “new apartheid”.



Statement around the passing of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

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Prof Robin Wood said of the Arch: “His interest and support lent his “moral compass” to counter institutional and political obstruction of care for those living with HIV. His personal suffering from tuberculosis fueled his interest in alleviating this scourge in South Africa. It continues to inspire us to work hard to solve these public health challenges. We are greatly honoured to bear his name.”

Ms. Zohra Ebrahim, the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation Board chair, adds: “His moral leadership was rooted in his deep humanity, and we were privileged to have this tireless campaigner against social injustice be vocal in support of people living with HIV. He advocated that health and wellbeing not be used as a source of social exclusion and are proud to have his legacy live on in the work we do in the DTHF. We acknowledge and send love to Thandi, the Arch’s daughter who is a board member.”

At this sad time, we recognise the deep loss that Mama Leah and the family are feeling. Our hearts go out to them all to find comfort and peace and be blessed by the memories of this wonderful husband, father and grandfather. His strong belief that evil can be overcome through love, passion and undaunting faith in humanity will lead us on to new challenges.

Hamba kahle Arch, your memory is a great blessing to us all. Rest softly.

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