

**South African AIDS Conference 2003  
Closing Ceremony: Justice Edwin Cameron  
August 6, 2003**

---

<sup>1</sup> kaisernetwork.org makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of written transcripts, but due to the nature of transcribing recorded material and the deadlines involved, they may contain errors or incomplete content. We apologize for any inaccuracies.

**MALE VOICE:** ...you will have noticed that over the three years from 2000 to now, the distance between what government wants and what we want, it has grown shorter and shorter, and has almost disappeared, and there's only one or two minor barriers, which are no different from the differences between scientists, so it's really been one part of that rapprochement and I'm very grateful to him. The second speaker is Edwin Cameron, and he's a judge in the appeal court. He's a man of this country, he's a man of his time, and he's more than I can ever say how important he is. I think he's a friend of mine. He's a colleague of mine. I'm proud to be on the same platform as him. And he's one of the few—one of the few—one of the many South Africans I admire (unintelligible). Edwin.

**JUSTICE EDWIN CAMERON:** Ladies and gentlemen, I was very encouraged by the speech of Dr. Ankesi (misspelled?) and by the courtesy and generosity of spirit with which he delivered it. I wish that it had come earlier in this conference, but I wish to thank him for it. I also want to give you some good news, which you don't know. Ms. Precious Matoso (misspelled?) was sitting next to me in the front there, and she was wearing a little AIDS badge, and it had on it PHRU. And PHRU stands for the unit (unintelligible) where Glenda Gray and Jones McIntire work. So she's a (unintelligible) of support for all the work they do, and I hope we can believe in that as well. But ladies and gentlemen, I really first want to

<sup>1</sup> kaisernet.org makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of written transcripts, but due to the nature of transcribing recorded material and the deadlines involved, they may contain errors or incomplete content. We apologize for any inaccuracies.

ask you, how are you?

**AUDIENCE:** (unintelligible).

**JUSTICE EDWIN CAMERON:** Are you? Are you tired? Who's tired? Who's frustrated? Who's a bit dejected? Yes? Who's pessimistic? Who's hopeful? Are you hopeful? Well, that's wonderful. Because I think for all the feelings that we have, we must remember what Angie and Prudence told us. All the feelings we have we're carrying on behalf of 45 million other South Africans and all those around them who love and support them. So those are the feelings that didn't come into this conference, the feelings of those who didn't make it here because they're too sick, because they didn't have the means or the resources to get here, and those that have already died. We're carrying all of those with us, all their hopes and feelings. What have we learned from this conference and why are so many of us hopeful, as I believe we must be. We haven't got a choice. I think there are three principle things, I think that we knew beforehand. They are not new things, but they are things that the conference underscored, and I want to mention them quickly. We are not powerless, first of all. Secondly, our history as a people equips us to deal effectively with this epidemic. And thirdly, the point that (unintelligible) has just emphasized, which is the need for concerted and united action. Deputy President Zuma stated at the outset on Sunday afternoon that we are not powerless. This

<sup>1</sup> kaisernet.org makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of written transcripts, but due to the nature of transcribing recorded material and the deadlines involved, they may contain errors or incomplete content. We apologize for any inaccuracies.

**South African AIDS Conference 2003**  
**Closing Ceremony: Justice Edwin Cameron**  
**August 6, 2003**

4

has been an epidemic of fear and discrimination and stigma and silence, an epidemic of disempowerment. And yet, that sense of fatalism and inevitability is the one thing that we've struggled against most in this epidemic, in which our activists, including those activists in the TIC, including Zaki Afmet (misspelled?) and those around him, have struggled against, and I want to recognize that and pay tribute to them. We do have power. And the emphasis that Dr. Ankesi put on the necessity for dialogue and his pride on what has happened at this conference is also important. Secondly then, the history of our national identity, which Deputy President Zuma also touched on. He said, don't think that we've come all this way to fight against apartheid, only to let our people die of AIDS. What he was saying is that we have the resources, we have the capacities, we have the intelligence, we have the capacity for common action as South Africa, as South Africans to deal with this epidemic. But that same history teaches us a very important lesson, which relates very closely to what Dr. Ankesi said today and what Dr. Antaluba (misspelled?). They said, the question is not if but when, with public provision of antiretrovirals. And our history teaches us an important point there--that we must not fall into the mistake of perfectionism. We didn't fight apartheid to become a democracy only when we were perfect as people. We seized democracy because we knew it was right for us. We seized democracy even when poverty and

<sup>1</sup> kaisernet.org makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of written transcripts, but due to the nature of transcribing recorded material and the deadlines involved, they may contain errors or incomplete content. We apologize for any inaccuracies.

racism and gender discrimination still existed. We seized it because we were entitled to democracy; hence our dignity as a people. We mustn't delay and disempower and incapacitate our own-ourselves by waiting for the perfect moment. I think that has been a persistent theme of so many of the stations that I've sat in of this epidemic. Well, we all accept then those common themes that have out of the conference. And I think everyone accepts Dr. Ankesi's call to common action. Common action must be based on certain shared values and beliefs. They are commitment to scientific and medical rationality and undertaking to accept the (unintelligible) of shared experience, an obligation to pursue what we can achieve as a people, and a duty to implement practical policies. Well, we had evidence at this conference yesterday morning that such policies are working. I found that one of the most hopeful and optimistic presentations was that of Dr. Fareed Abdullah yesterday morning. You will remember that he's the head of the HIV/AIDS program in the Western Cape. He made some very important points. He made five important points, which I think we should take away with us at the end of this conference. First, he said that there could be no effective AIDS program without the widespread use of antiretroviral medications. And in conjunction with that point, he said that no nutritional program, no supplemental program is going to diminish the deaths that result from AIDS. That's very important. Second,

<sup>1</sup> kaisernet.org makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of written transcripts, but due to the nature of transcribing recorded material and the deadlines involved, they may contain errors or incomplete content. We apologize for any inaccuracies.

he said that the program in the Western Cape was showing that it was possible to provide antiretrovirals successfully to poor people who lived in impoverished circumstances in our townships and informal settlements. Third, he emphasized that administering antiretrovirals through the public health sector is not a simple matter, but at the same time he said we mustn't exaggerate the difficulties. Those are the two difficulties of our debate, when I hear Dr. Ankesi say not if but when; when I hear Dr. Antaluba say, as he said yesterday, not if but when. Are we going to allow ourselves to be derailed by perfectionism? Are we going to allow ourselves to be derailed by exaggerating problems? And the answer we all really know is that we cannot allow that to happen. Fourth, Dr. Abdullah emphasized that the Western Cape was achieving significant successes, but that it would be wrong to ascribe these to the better resources or better infrastructure of the Western Cape. What is being attained there is a successful model for implementation elsewhere. And finally, the fifth point he made, which he didn't say, but which is implicit in his whole speech. The Western Cape government is a coalition between the new National Party and the ANC. This is the good news of his presentation, that this is not a party political issue. The Western Cape program is being implemented by an ANC government. We want those same commitments nationwide. I have not heard Dr. Abdullah being repudiated. Let us have him endorsed. Let

<sup>1</sup> kaisernetwork.org makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of written transcripts, but due to the nature of transcribing recorded material and the deadlines involved, they may contain errors or incomplete content. We apologize for any inaccuracies.

South African AIDS Conference 2003  
Closing Ceremony: Justice Edwin Cameron  
August 6, 2003

7

us have what is happening there be endorsed nationally. That would be a good basis for the hope that we've all expressed on this conference. We heard from Prudence earlier the grief and the anger and the pain and the sense of loss and exhaustion which so many of us feel about AIDS. Let us take from this conference the determination to stop that. We can do it. Thank you very much.

**MALE VOICE:** Thanks very much, Edwin. The last speaker for today and for the conference is Dr. Kgosi Letlape. He is an ophthalmologist by training and by practice, but he's also the head of the South African Medical Association. and he has been a tireless fighter for antiretroviral care for HIV affected--infected individuals, and people living with HIV. Kgosi.

[END OF RECORDING]