

BIOGRAPHY OF ZACKIE ACHMAT

Zackie Achmat lives with HIV/AIDS. Born in 1962, he joined the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa during the 1976 uprisings. He was detained and imprisoned on more than 5 occasions as a youth activist. Zackie was a community activist who assisted with the organisation of youth, labour, health and community organisations between 1977 and 1990. He is still an active member of the African National Congress.

He also campaigned for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality and was a founder member of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality – the coalition campaigned for the equality clause in the Constitution, the decriminalisation of same-sex practices and the equal right of lesbian and gay relationships. Zackie was also director of the AIDS Law Project between 1994-1997.

In December 1998, together with 10 other activists, he launched the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). Since then, TAC has become one of the leading HIV/AIDS activist voices in South Africa – it took a clear stand against drug company profiteering. At the risk of arrest, Zackie volunteered for TAC's Defiance Campaign against patent abuse by Pfizer to bring life-saving treatment for opportunistic infections into South Africa. TAC also opposed the HIV denialist positions in government and campaigned for access to AZT/Nevirapine for pregnant women with HIV/AIDS, this included organising litigation against the Minister of Health. This court battle has been successful in that TAC had most recently won the Constitutional Court hearing against the Minister of Health and Others to provide AZT/Nevirapine to pregnant women.

Zackie Achmat has researched, written and directed numerous TV documentaries. He holds a BA Hons (cum laude) from the University of Western Cape and at the moment, he is studying to complete an M.Phil in Law at the University of Cape Town. He was awarded an Honorary Masters Degree at the University of Cape Town – 2002. This year 2003, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Law from the University of Natal. He was also awarded the first Desmond Tutu Fellowship in October 2001.