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## HONORARY DEGREE

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**Abdurrazak ‘Zackie’ Achmat**  
**Doctor of Laws (honoris causa)**

Zackie Achmat has devoted his life to fighting social injustice and discrimination.

Through his work at the AIDS Law Project and his role as co-founder (and, later, director) of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), Achmat was involved in a number of cases from the mid-1990s onwards that first established, and then enforced, the constitutional rights of gay and lesbian people in South Africa. In 1995, an interdict was secured preventing the police from harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation. Subsequent legal victories followed, including the decriminalisation of gay sex; ensuring that same-sex couples were not discriminated against in their access to medical aid and pension benefits, or denied rights to permanent residence.

The next phase of Zackie Achmat’s social activism commenced with the formation of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which he co-founded in 1998. The TAC fought for, and won, a series of cases that compelled the government to provide treatment for people infected with HIV/AIDS, and to provide nevirapine to HIV-positive pregnant women. It has been estimated that the original failure to provide these treatments resulted in the avoidably premature deaths of more than 300 000 South Africans. The TAC finally resulted in the government antiretroviral treatment programme now being the world’s largest, with more than 3 million South Africans currently on treatment. Having secured the roll-out of treatment, the TAC played an important role in monitoring of clinics to ensure that those on treatment were able to receive their medication.

In more recent years, Zackie Achmat has channelled his activism in new directions, playing a formative role in the establishment of cause-specific social justice-oriented NGOs such as Equal Education and Ndifuna Ukwazi, with foci on school and sanitation infrastructure.

Throughout, Zackie Achmat has combined clever use of the law with mass-based activism to hold national, provincial, and local layers of government to account in meeting the legitimate demands of the poor, the marginalised, and the voiceless.

Zackie Achmat’s life work is an embodiment of UCT’s values which seeks the fostering of an institutional culture that protects and advances the transformative values of the Constitution, and promotes a more equitable and just society based on respect for human rights and human dignity.