

Dr. Ivan Toms (1953-2008)

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Created 2008/03/27 - 12:33am

27 March, 2008 - 00:33 ? moderator

People's Doctor, Apartheid War Resistor, Gay Activist, Public Health Official and Friend of People with AIDS

25 March 2008

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) mourns the premature and sudden death of Dr. Ivan Toms, the head of City Health in the Cape Town Metro. Ivan was known to many TAC leaders since the early 1980s. We remember Ivan as a friend, comrade, gay activist and public health official.

Ivan Toms was a courageous doctor at the SACLA Clinic in Crossroads who resisted forced removals, military incursions and pass law enforcement in townships. He became a conscientious objector in the Conscientious Objector Support Group and the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) who served time in prison for refusing to serve in the apartheid army. He was also a doctor who volunteered his time for the free clinic run by the Bellville Community Health Projects in the 1980s.

Ivan was as a leader in OLGA, the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists - an affiliate of the United Democratic Front (UDF). He was a founder of the Progressive Primary Healthcare Network. Ivan was also a pioneer of HIV prevention work.

Recently, as head of City Health in the Cape Town Metro, Ivan regularly attended TAC Western Cape planning meetings and through Dr. Virginia Azevedo developed a partnership with TAC's model district in Khayelitsha. Key to joint work between City Health and TAC Khayelitsha is HIV prevention work with the distribution of more than 9 million condoms in the community in 2007. Joint work by TAC, City Health, the Provincial Health Department, MSF and others as partners on TB increased the cure rate from 53% to 68%. City Health also increased the number of antiretroviral roll-out sites.

Fredalene Booyesen (TAC Western Cape Co-ordinator) said: "The death of Dr. Toms has saddened all of us. TAC will ensure that he is remembered through the prevention of HIV and TB infections, treating both illnesses, improving maternal and child health, and building a quality public health system."

Mandla Majola (TAC Khayelitsha) said: "Ivan Toms will be remembered as a peoples' doctor who cared deeply about working class and poor communities, as well as, marginalized groups. People living with HIV/AIDS have lost a friend and our communities a doctor who cared. He still had much work to do in our country."

Zackie Achmat (TAC Deputy General-Secretary) said: "I met Ivan Toms in 1982, he was always committed to public health. He was an energetic, humorous and dedicated activist. Anti-apartheid activists will mourn his premature death."

The Treatment Action Campaign extends condolences to his family, friends, comrades and colleagues.

Issued by: Vuyiseka Dubula (TAC General-Secretary) Phone: 0827633005.

Source URL (retrieved on 2018/02/21 - 7:12pm): <http://www.tac.org.za/community/node/2069>