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Biography, Professor Debra Meyer

The AIDS and language activist Debra Meyer, is a full professor at the University of Pretoria where she is also the Head of the Biochemistry Department. She was born in the 'Grand' a small 'mixed -race community south of Kliptown and raised in the Coloured community of Eldorado Park in Johannesburg, during the intense discrimination and segregation of apartheid. Following matriculation at Willow Crescent Senior Secondary School in Eldorado Park, she completed a BSc in Biological Sciences, a BSc Honours in Biochemistry and a Masters degree in Biochemistry at the Rand Afrikaans University. She then completed her tertiary education by obtaining a PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of California, Davis in the United States of America. She started working as a lecturer and researcher in Biochemistry at the Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg) at the end of 1997 and joined the University of Pretoria at the end of 2007. Professor Meyer is the recipient of numerous research awards including the NRF/NSTF TW Kambule awards in 2004 and 2010 and the prestigious Young Scientist Award from the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World in 2005. [The Academy of Science, based in Trieste in Italy, has been supporting science in Africa and other parts of the "third world" for nearly a quarter of a century]. In 2007 she was one of ten women selected by Rapport and City Press News Papers as prestigious women of South Africa.

Professor Meyer sees her contribution to a transformed South Africa in scientific as well as social terms. She therefore contributes to the fight against AIDS through multidisciplinary research, giving public lectures, writing articles for research and secular media and initiating community service projects. Her research has contributed over 40 publications in international journals. She is on the editorial board of two international journals and serves on the board of directors of 4 organizations. An issue that lies very close to her heart is contributing to a better understanding of all South Africans about the origin, history and languages of the Coloured People. To that end she gives annual lectures, writes articles for magazines and books and does interviews and panel discussions on this topic. She is an accomplished author, a poet and sought after public speaker providing scientific and social commentary relevant to the South African experience. In addition, Professor Meyer presented the Weather on SABC 2 twice a week from 2000 to 2012 and in 2014 launched science-based program called 'Debra deel' on KykNet.