



PRESS RELEASE

e Press Release: 3rd Degree - “The Price of Denial”

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Ten years ago, the seeds were sown for one of the deepest human tragedies of post-apartheid South Africa. The seeds were sown by none other than our very own president and his minister of health.

Together, President Thabo Mbeki and Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang questioned the scientific truth that a sexually-transmitted virus caused AIDS. It was nothing less than state-sponsored AIDS denialism.

If the link was denied, one could overlook the devastating behavioural patterns that fuel the spread of HIV. If the link wasn't proven, then there was no need to roll out anti-HIV medicine.

The two leaders courted denialists and quacks from around the world, delaying the speedy roll-out of proven treatment, while death swept through our cities, villages and townships.

Scientists say that well over 330 000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses during the Mbeki era – some of these deaths could have been prevented by the timely and purposeful roll-out of life-prolonging anti-retrovirals.

But it's not only scientists who knew the truth about anti-retroviral therapy. This Tuesday, 3rd Degree tells the very personal stories of mothers and children who came to understand that denial was no way to treat the virus that ripped their lives apart.

To this day, ordinary people count the cost in their own lives of policy mistakes and the systematic undermining of the health sector during the Mbeki years.

We ask: Should Thabo Mbeki and his administration be charged with genocide?

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