The world lost two wonderful doctors who devoted their lives to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa. Ironically, they both died of COVID-19 within hours of each other in late January in Zimbabwe.

David Katzenstein, MD, began his career in the early 1980s working with underserved populations at a Native Tribal clinic in New Mexico and with persons suffering from AIDS at the Haight Ashbury Clinic in San Francisco, conducted CMV research at the University of Minnesota, and then took a position working as a microbiologist at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare between 1985 and 1987. In 1989, David joined the faculty at Stanford University where he remained until his retirement in 2017.

Dr Katzenstein, led many important clinical and translational research studies related to HIV. With his colleagues in the AIDS Clinical Trials Group (ACTG), he led studies that resulted in the approval of life-saving antiretroviral medications. David dedicated a major portion of his academic endeavors to study HIV drug resistance, serving as director of one of the Virology Specialty Laboratories for the ACTG for many years. He was a protocol team member and leader on several ACTG studies and served on numerous ACTG committees, including the Performance Evaluation Committee and the original Virology Committee. He was co-chair of ACTG 384 that dealt with protease and/or non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors, and was one of the first investigators to call attention to the issues of drug resistance in Africa.

Recognizing the disparate impact of HIV in resource limited settings, David was a pioneer in Global HIV Research, in the fields of perinatal HIV transmission prevention, and studying different approaches to optimize antiretroviral treatment and laboratory monitoring in various settings around the world. He worked diligently to bring laboratory technology to Zimbabwe.

Following his retirement from Stanford in 2017, David became the director of the Biomedical Research Training Institute in Zimbabwe where he led the molecular diagnostics laboratory to support laboratory monitoring of community-based treatment programs. In all his work, David engaged researchers and trainees from different parts of the world. Generous with his time, effort and ideas, David was a cherished mentor for many young and mid-career physicians and scientists, now scattered throughout different academic institutions and agencies in the U.S. He nurtured careers of clinicians, basic and social scientists, while encouraging multidisciplinary efforts to tackle the global HIV pandemic. He worked tirelessly and with great joy, giving of himself without reserve.

James Gita Hakim, MRCP-UK, Professor of Medicine, University of Zimbabwe College of Health Sciences, to

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COVID-19. Dr Hakim was an accomplished investigator who made seminal contributions in HIV treatment and prevention research. He was known internationally for his accomplishments as a research leader, a builder of African research capacity, a leader of modernizing medical education in Africa, and as a mentor of young African investigators.

Dr Hakim was at the forefront of clinical research on HIV/AIDS in Africa for over 20 years. He founded the University of Zimbabwe Clinical Research Centre (UZ-CRC) in 2001 as a site for international clinical trials on HIV treatment and prevention. He was a leader in pivotal international clinical trials including the landmark HIV ‘treatment as prevention’ trial HPTN 052, the MRC-funded “Development of Anti-Retroviral Therapy in Africa” (DART) trial, and the ACTG “Prospective Evaluation of Antiretroviral Therapy in Resource Limited Settings” (PEARLS) study. These studies contributed to the knowledge needed for successful implementation of antiretroviral therapy in southern Africa.

Dr Hakim was as Principal Investigator of the University of Zimbabwe’s program, the Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) which serves as a model for medical education in Africa. He was as a representative on the International AIDS Society (IAS) Governing Council from 2016 to 2020 and on the World Health Organization Guidelines Review Committee, the UNAIDS Advisory Committee, and on program committees for IAS Conference on HIV Science, the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI). Dr Hakim was Co-chair of the World AIDS Conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands in 2018. James Hakim’s life demonstrated how investment in biomedical research and modern medical education can pay large dividends and be transformative for Africa.

The world is better for the lives you lived, David and James. May light perpetual shine upon you.