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# War of words over Mbeki's Aids view

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AIDS denialist Anthony Brink has struck back at his one-time close friend, controversial author Ronald Suresh Roberts, accusing him of misrepresenting President Thabo Mbeki's view on HIV/Aids.

Brink has written up an account of his interactions with Roberts in a 376-page book called *Lying and Thieving: the fraudulent scholarship of Ronald Suresh Roberts*, which can be ordered or downloaded for R120 from a website called [www.lyingandthieving.com](http://www.lyingandthieving.com)

He describes Roberts as "a fabricator and falsifier of history, and the author of a colossal literary fraud, and accordingly so grossly unprofessional and discreditable a writer that he's unfit to be relied upon for any purpose, not even for directions to the post office".

Brink's self-published book is in response to Roberts's own book, *Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki*, that was launched in June.

In it, Roberts says that Mbeki "is not now, nor has he ever been, an Aids dissident", and also makes various derogatory comments about Brink.

However, in his counter-

punch Brink says that Mbeki was "rather less enthusiastic about (Roberts's) book than its author and his political patron, Minister in the Presidency Esop Hanad".

"It is so because, concerning his thinking on Aids -- the big issue the book promised to exp. at -- Mbeki thought it complete garbage," says Brink.

In contrast, says Brink, Mark Gevisser's book *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* tells "the remarkable story of how Mbeki moved to set the record straight".

This refers to Gevisser's description in his book of how, in the same month that Roberts's book was published, Mbeki phoned Gevisser late on a Saturday night to ask him whether he had seen the controversial Aids denialist document titled *Casus Illogwane, Caravans, Cats, Geese, Foot & Mouth and Statistics*. The document had initially been distributed in the ANC by the late Peter Mokaba in 2001.

The following day, an updated version of the Illogwane document was delivered to Gevisser. While Mbeki denied he was the sole author, Gevisser wrote that Mbeki told him the document accurately

represented his views. A central thesis of the Illogwane document is the rejection "as illogical, the proposition that Aids is a single disease caused by a singular virus, HIV".

Brink implies that Mbeki had read Roberts's book by then, and wanted to correct Roberts by letting Gevisser know that he was still an Aids denialist.

## Dissident

"There is no question as to the message Thabo Mbeki was delivering to me along with this document: he was now, as he has been since 1999, an Aids dissident," wrote Gevisser.

Brink's book, aside from being a defence of Mbeki as an Aids denialist, is also a bitter attack on his erstwhile friend, Roberts, whom he felt had used his knowledge and then betrayed him by making various nasty comments about him in his book.

Asked for comment last night, Roberts referred to remark he wrote on his blog on the *Mail and Guardian* website.

There, Roberts said it was "extremely defamatory" for Brink to say that he had

"fraudulently misrepresented" Mbeki's views on Aids.

Brink's manuscript offered "peculiar propaganda designed to suggest that President Thabo Mbeki, like Brink himself, denies that HIV causes Aids", Roberts wrote.

"Brink believes that the recent biography by Mark Gevisser supports his portrayal of Mbeki as a denier of the thesis that HIV causes Aids.

"The problems for Brink begin in Gevisser's book itself. At page 758 Gevisser quotes President Mbeki himself objecting that a campaign was launched, that I've said that HIV does not cause Aids, which I never did, and all sorts of other things, all these charges about genocide, and so on."

Roberts added that Gevisser himself had said at the launch of his book on November 5 that Mbeki was not an Aids denialist.

Roberts also noted that in a letter to *Business Day* published yesterday, Mbeki's spokesman, Mukoni Ratshtanga, had written: "The president is not now, nor has he ever been, an Aids denialist", a point which Gevisser himself has publicly acknowledged." - *Health-e News Service*