

Hussein Samatar loses battle with leukemia, dies at 45

Written by
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Hussein Samatar, the first Somali born citizen to hold public office in the state of Minnesota, died on Sunday, Aug. 25.

Samatar was elected as a member of the Minneapolis School Board and was the founder of the African Development Center. He was 45-years-old.

An outspoken and respected community leader, Samatar was a current member of the Minneapolis School Board and his term was to have run until 2015.

"I join the rest of the Minneapolis Public Schools community in mourning the loss of Director Hussein Samatar," said Dr. Bernadeia Johnson, superintendent of Minneapolis Public schools in a released statement. "Hussein was a passionate leader, a committed public servant, a dedicated collaborator and a valued friend. My thoughts, prayers and the condolences of countless others at MPS and in our larger community are with his family as they grieve his passing and celebrate his legacy."

As founder of the African Development Center (ADC), the organization emerged as a leader in micro lending to small businesses, outperforming even the largest banking institutions in the state of Minnesota. According to the organization, over the past three years, the ADC has been recognized as the number one small business lender in the city of Minneapolis.

"Hussein Samatar was a shining example for every American," said Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN). "His story is inspiring. His spirit was infectious. He loved Minnesota and everyone in it. He came here with nothing, learned English at a Minneapolis library and went on to serve our community

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with distinction. He will be greatly missed, but he lives on through the countless people he touched in our city and our state.”

Samatar immigrated to Minneapolis in the mid 1990s and quickly established himself as a community leader. In 2006, Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak appointed Samatar to the Minneapolis Library Board. Prior to his leadership with the African Development Center, Samatar worked as a commercial banker with Wells Fargo and Norwest banks. Samatar held a master’s in business administration from St. Thomas University and was fluent in five languages. He was selected as a Humphrey Institute Policy Fellow in 2003-2004 and a German Marshall Memorial Fellow in 2007.

In a statement released by the ADC, the organization said, “Hussein was a courageous and dedicated public servant, and will be missed by many – well beyond those who have benefited from his ambitious initiatives here at ADC, the Minneapolis School Board, and throughout the community.”

Samatar is survived by his wife, Ubah Jama and their four children.