

Dedication

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This issue of *Canadian Social Studies* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Otilia Chareka, who died under tragic circumstances on 16 March, 2011. At the time of her death, Dr. Chareka was an Associate Professor of Education (Social Studies) at St. Francis-Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Her research focused on the experiences of immigrant youth, and African immigrant youth in particular, and conceptions of democratic participation and their role in political society. Dr. Chareka was interested in better understanding what institutional and societal structures formally or informally enabled or prevented immigrants from participating in Canadian political arenas. We have decided to reprint an article written by Dr. Chareka (with J. Nyemah and A. Manguvo) published by CSS in Spring 2010, in recognition of the important research she undertook during her all too brief career.

Memories of my sister-friend

Carla L. Peck

Dr. Otilia Chareka and I shared an office at the University of New Brunswick from 2001-2003. Otilia was working towards her PhD, and I was just beginning my Master's of Education. We shared many hours together in our small office, working, talking and laughing, but it is our first meeting that I remember most vividly. Before the term had started, I had heard that I would be sharing an office with someone named Otilia, who was from Zimbabwe. I learned that Otilia had already earned two degrees at UNB and that she was coming back to do her PhD. However, I remember there being some uncertainty about if or when she would arrive in Fredericton as Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe, was making life very difficult for ordinary Zimbabweans, and particularly difficult for anyone who dared to challenge his government or raise concerns about human rights. At the time, Otilia was an instructor at a teacher's college in Harare and her area was social studies and global education. Human rights were kind of her thing.

At the beginning of the Fall term, I arrived in our office sometime after lunch and found Otilia at her desk. We introduced ourselves and, seeing that she was busy working on her computer, I got to work getting myself settled in to my corner of our office. It didn't take long for me to notice that something on Otilia's computer screen had caught her attention and was causing her some distress. Then I noticed that she was crying softly. When I asked her if she was okay, she told me that she had just read a newspaper article from Zimbabwe reporting that one of her colleagues from the Teachers' College where she had worked (and where she had been just days earlier) was shot by government forces after fleeing for his life. He was also a human rights educator.

Needless to say, our very first meeting left a lasting impression on me. Over time, Otilia and I grew to call ourselves sisters, and as our friendship grew, so did our special bond. I miss her terribly.

Otilia is survived by her five daughters (ages 4 – 23). A Memorial Fund established for her daughters was set up by the St. Francis-Xavier University community and can be accessed here: http://sites.stfx.ca/education/memorial_fund/

