

Chachage Seithy Loth Chachage Lives On in Our Daily Struggles

The news of the sudden death on Sunday 9 July 2006 of our esteemed colleague and comrade-in-arms, Professor Chachage Seithy Loth Chachage came to us in the CODESRIA Secretariat as a shock that will take us a while to come to terms with. During the last two weeks of his life, he had numerous telephone exchanges with us in the CODESRIA Secretariat both concerning the on-going struggle for academic freedom he was helping to coordinate at the University of Dar-Es-Salaam and on CODESRIA programmatic matters centering on medium-to-long-term institutional personnel strategy. During those exchanges, we had a glimpse into the full agenda which he was running and the usual selfless commitment with which he was attending to his assignments. We also noted that he was, in spite of his time pressure, his usual witty self, delivering his critique of all that was wrong with contemporary African higher education with his uncommon, trademark punch-lines that sent us both thinking and cracking with laughter at the same time. What we did not see, nor even had a possibility of guessing was that we were witnessing the last moments of his sojourn with us. And when the news of his death reached us from his mentor, colleague and friend, Professor Issa Shivji, a numbing sense of disbelief prevailed among us. And now, we have the onerous duty of informing all members of CODESRIA, on behalf of the Council's Executive Committee, of the loss of a titan of African social scientists.

CSL Chachage, a completely self-educated and self-made person was unique among his peers. An original thinker who had no time for intellectual fads, he contributed some of the most interesting insights into the roots of the crises of post-colonial development in Africa. He left no one in any doubt as to where his commitment lay: with the working people of Africa whose toils he identified with as defining the purpose for his scholarship. His versatility was also unmatched. Apart from bestriding the social sciences in his writings, at once addressing historical, philosophical sociological, political and economic issues, he was also a keen novelist who combined his passion for creative writing with an equal commitment to supporting African scholarly publishing. The last five years of his life were easily among his most prolific; it was as if he knew, somehow, that time was no longer on his side. But the stream of works that flowed from his pen did not prevent him from maintaining his love for teaching. He was elected head of the Department of Sociology and a member of the deanship at the University of Dar-es-Salaam during this period. He also resumed a frontline leadership role in the University of Dar-Es-Salaam Academic Staff Assembly. Furthermore, after a period of time as the Chair of the CODESRIA Scientific Committee, he was elected into the Council's Executive Committee at the 11th General Assembly held in Maputo, Mozambique, in December 2005.

To say we shall miss Chachage would be an understatement. But as our comrade transits to join other frontline CODESRIA militants such as Claude Ake and Guy Mhone, we must, as a community, seize the moment to rededicate our commitment to Africa and humanity. For, when the epitaph of our Chachage is written, it will surely be highlighted that he was a foremost gentleman driven by the greatest humanitarian principles of all social justice and freedom.

Members of the African social research community wishing to send messages of condolence to the late CSL Chachage's family may do so through this e-mail address: Executive.Secretary@codesria.sn

May Chachage's soul rest in peace.

Adebayo Olukoshi,
Executive Secretary
10 July 2006