

## **In memory of Gugulethu Siziba: 1979 – 2017**



My first encounter with Gugulethu Siziba (Gugu) was in 2003, when I was a first year student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ), and he was then a Graduate Teaching Assistant. I was not fortunate enough to have been tutored by him then, but he was well known amongst the student cohort of my stream as being of high intellect and as uncompromising to principle. My first encounters with him were largely characterised by fleeting and often silent bypassings in the corridors of UZ Sociology. Having gone through the undergraduate and postgraduate programs at UZ, I was to connect with Gugu at a very personal level in 2008 when I joined the UZ Sociology Department as a lecturer – becoming his colleague and close friend. As Gugu’s co-lecturer and friend, I was to learn a lot from him through our sustained and passionate academic and personal interactions. We organically forged what I can characterise as a formidable friendship. 2008 to 2010 was a time of great economic difficulties in Zimbabwe, and our friendship involved various forms of moral and material support as we navigated this difficult socio-economic climate – trying our hands in other ventures beyond the academy. Vivid in my memory is a fuel business that was never to be.

In 2010, we ‘conspired’ to leave the University of Zimbabwe in pursuit of avenues to build our academic profiles. Our destination was the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, where we were to enrol into PhD programs. While I remained at Wits, Gugu had to leave Wits for Stellenbosch University in early 2011. It was at Stellenbosch that Gugu was able to complete his Ph.D, and to chisel his interests at the intersections of questions of migrancy, language, and identity. While he was at Stellenbosch, we maintained our interactions and exchanges. In 2012 we spent memorable times together when Gugu stayed with me in Johannesburg, whilst conducting fieldwork for his Ph.D. We shared a room. We had multiple days and

nights of academic exchanges in which we engaged rigorous debates over the various tropes of Pierre Bourdieu's work – a theorist whose ideas we both deployed in our doctoral theses. The 'materialities of the (Bourdieuian) capitals'<sup>1</sup> that we exchanged during the prolonged nocturnal Bourdieusian engagements – which we tagged as the 'Nights of Long Knives' -, I shall cherish incessantly.

I shall always remember Gugu as a 'fountain' – of knowledge and wisdom. He was a man of great intellect whose ideas will live on – inscribed to eternity and in the minds of those of us he shared his life with. I particularly always relied on Gugu for genuine and brotherly advice. He was a very frank man. He would always 'call a spade a spade' – and not a spade a spoon. No matter how much it hurt, he told the truth as he saw it. Who could ask for a better friend? What a loss! What a nine years of friendship!

May Gugu's Soul rest in peace! And may his footprints be emblazoned permanently through his ideas and deeds.

Obvious Katsaura  
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<sup>1</sup> Siziba, G. (2013). *Language and the politics of identity in South Africa: The case of Zimbabwean (Shona and Ndebele speaking) migrants in Johannesburg* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).