

Wokie Rose Kpaka (1960-2011): An Appreciation



On Saturday 10th September, I received a distressing phone call from Margaret Nyanga Allieu, informing me that Wokie Kpaka, along with her daughter - Maria Khonor Kallon (aged 13 years), had been tragically killed in a traffic accident. A short time later I discovered that this shocking news had been relayed rapidly around to everyone who knew, loved and admired Wokie - and this means a lot of people. Although we had been hearing about her for several years, through various Spiritans (Holy Ghost Fathers) who knew her in Sierra Leone, staff here in Kimmage at the Development Studies Centre, only first got to know her in 2007 when she came to study on the BA programme. Very quickly we saw a woman of great poise, of great conviction, who was dynamic, quick witted - a real leader in the group. She was always comfortable and at her most animated when working with groups, facilitating, arguing, provoking laughter and good insights. She eventually received her BA following her research work at home in 2010, and we maintained good contact with Wokie over the years, not least because she took an active and leading role in establishing an association for former students from Sierra Leone and Liberia - the Kimmage Past Participant Alumni Association for West Africa (KIPPAA) - indeed, becoming the first President of this group in 2008. We were nurturing plans to use the work of Wokie and others in KIPPAA as a solid resource for other capacity development work, including open and distance learning in the region. So while we feel a tremendous sadness about the loss of Wokie and her daughter Maria, we wish to honour the memory of them both, and draw upon the example of Wokie Rose Kpaka, as an inspiration for our work and that of all who seek justice and equality in the world today. May they both rest in peace.

Paddy Reilly, Director, 29/11/11