

It is with profound sadness, and a deep and abiding sense of obligation, that the community of indigenous historians of Sierra Leone, and allied enthusiasts, has received news of the passing of the much-revered Dean of the history of Sierra Leone, Christopher Fyfe. Christopher devoted enormous energies, time, and resources to his research and writing on Freetown and its Krio community, and the ties between that group and the other ethnic societies of Sierra Leone. With great insight, profound dedication, and an uncommon empathy, Christopher told the story of a people that were much misunderstood in the literature of slavery's abolition, and he charted, with great circumspection, their progress in the colonial state through timeless reviews of families, institutions, and personalities drawn from a wide range of social classes. To name Christopher Fyfe the pioneer of Sierra Leone's historiography is to acknowledge a reality that can never be controverted, and one that has been much celebrated in that nation's scholarly community. The inspiration that has found expression in significant scholarly contributions by locals over the years came,

unquestionably, from Christopher's seminal reflections, and, as a people, Sierra Leoneans will always be in the debt of this illustrious man of letters who wore his considerable erudition ever so lightly.

Sierra Leone has lost a true friend, a worthy champion of its past, a devoted mentor to several generations of young scholars, and a compassionate and eager listener and promoter of all things scholarly, whose door was always open to those who came his way, be it in Edinburgh, or, more recently, at Spangate, in London. No one Sierra Leonean was too insignificant for his attentions; no topic on Freetown too marginal for his interest and disquisition. How can we ever forget those generous checks that came our way over the years; that penetrating and incisive critique, ever so politely delivered, that made your writing better. He was for us, his appreciative students and junior colleagues, the little man with the very big heart, who brought new meaning to "multum in parvo."

Submitted by Charles Becker, August 31, 2008

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