



# IN MEMORIAM

# CHARLES ROACH

**ACTIVIST + ARTIST + MUSICIAN + LAWYER + REVOLUTIONARY**

Equality and civil rights advocates across Canada lost an incredible community activist and friend with the passing of renowned lawyer Charles Roach. Charlie never shied away from a cause. For more than 50 years, he led the fight against systemic racism and defended the most vulnerable in society. He will be greatly missed by the labour movement, as a true champion of the rights of all working people.

Hailing from Trinidad and Tobago, Charlie quickly became a leader in Toronto's black community. As a prominent human rights lawyer, he defended the rights of Jamaican nannies, challenged racial profiling, demanded police accountability and became known for providing legal representation to working class individuals and communities, regardless of their ability to pay.

Himself a landed immigrant for more than 50 years, Charlie never lived to receive Canadian citizenship because he refused to take the oath to the Queen - a law he fought to change for a quarter century and is being carried on today by others.

"I wonder whether it was having a trade unionist activist for a father, his Irish roots, or his proud heritage as a Caribbean man who had enough of living under British Imperial rule that radicalized Charlie and led him to embrace the civil rights movement that swept across North America," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "But whatever it was that lit the fire in his belly, his actions had a profound impact and there is no question that the entire country benefits daily from his legacy."

Whether in churches, community centres, courts or the streets, Charlie spent more than five decades building movements to challenge racism, oppression, exploitation and bigotry. He inspired others to discover their own courage and to find their own voice.

"Charlie's 57 years of dedicated commitment to fighting for equality in Canada have proven him to be a model citizen — despite our government's failure to grant him the official title," said Ryan. "Based upon Charlie's determined efforts, I am sure that in the future Canadians of all races will no longer have to swear their allegiance to the Queen — or to anyone else whose superiority is determined by birth."

Charlie passed away on October 2, 2012 after a battle with brain cancer. He is survived by his wife, June Thorne-Roach, and four children. The hearts of working people are with Charlie's family.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE  
SEPTEMBER 15, 1933 - OCTOBER 2, 2012

**ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR**

cope343

