

## ACHR LOSES AN OLD FRIEND IN JAPAN: PROFESSOR YUZO UCHIDA

On January 26th, 2011, during the ACHR regional meeting in Bangkok, we received an e-mail from Hosaka with the sad news that Professor Yuzo Uchida, of Toyo University, had suffered a heart attack and passed away early that morning. During the meeting, several friends of Uchida-san spoke about him, and we observed a minute of silence, for Professor Uchida and for some other ACHR friends who have passed away in the past year - Ken Fernandez (who died on January 1, 2010) and Rabial Malick (who died on April 11, 2010). Here are three of Uchida-san's friends remembering him during the meeting :

**Hosaka :** Professor Uchida joined the Kanchanaburi meeting in February 1986 which led to the establishment of ACHR, and since then has always facilitated interactions between Japan's Buraku communities and the urban social movement in Asia. He was deeply committed to social change for a just society. I wonder why we have to hear such cruel news every year? Perhaps simply because we are getting old. But we, who are left behind, carry on and pursue the work that was pursued by Peter, Ken and Uchida.

**Father Jorge :** I was always very much impressed with Professor Uchida's commitment to the truth. When he saw something which was wrong, he would always stand up against it. Even when he was a student, he would stand up in front of everybody when there was something wrong in the university. He had a tremendous sense of justice. Uchida was one of the pioneering academics to work with the Buraku communities in Japan. In the last years of his life, he even acted as chairman of the East-Japan Research Institute for Buraku Liberation. The Buraku are an out-caste group of people who have been discriminated against for centuries in Japan. He brought a lot of strength to all the problems of justice. When we began this project of ACHR, he was one of the few professors who went to Cambodia, and was one of the teachers there. *(Father Jorge then says a prayer for Professor Uchida)* Uchida, you always tried to go farther than your personal interests. You were always looking for the truth, and you always tried to raise yourself to a better level of life. We wish that in this moment, you are also looking at us, through a higher point of view. And we ask you to help us to go far away from our own egoism, and to try to find out the problems of the people around us, the problems of our cities, the problems of our countries and the world as a whole. Please help us to do this.

**Inamoto :** I met Professor Uchida 40 years ago. I was a student then, and he was my teacher. The thing Professor Uchida always taught me was that when you are working in the field, you should not try to push the things that you learned at university on the humble people in the communities. Instead, you should listen to them and learn from them. You may propose something, of course, but you need to have a dialogue with them. If you only push your ideas from university on them, as many people do, then you are wrong. And if Professor Uchida suspected that I was doing these wrong things, he would be very angry!

**PHOTO :** That's Professor Uchida, in the front row with the black shirt and white hair, during an ACHR-Japan gathering in Tokyo no too long ago.



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