

Chika da silva book reviews examples

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



This is a book about Oliveira Fransisca da Silva (1732-1796) (Furtado 10).

This is a woman who was born in slavery but ended up becoming powerful and rich. This woman's life has inspired very many. Popularly known as the queen who became a queen, her life has been a source of inspiration for very many works in literature, theatre, films and television.

She was born in Vila do Principe in Minas Gerais in the north in Brazil. Her residence was in Diamantina (formerly known as Arrail do Tijuco). Her father was a Portuguese man. Antonio Caetano and his black slave lover (Maria da Costa) were from Gulf of Guinea or maybe Bahia. Being very poor, after getting pregnant, she was forced to sell her daughter to Oliveira Jao Fernandos. Jao fernandes was among the richest people in Arrail to Tijuco (in colonial Brazil). De Oleveira Jao Fernandes soon fell in love with Fransisca and they started romancing. She was then freed by him. Though unofficially married, the couple did what is nowadays called 'come we stay' (Furtado16). They lived together for several years and ended up having thirteen children. The names of the children were Jose Agostino Fernandes (1770), Mariana (1769), Qiteria Rita (1767), Maria (1766), Antonoia (1765), Luiza (1764), Helena (1763), Ana (1762), Antonia Caetano (1761), Joaquim (1759), Rita (1757) and Joao Fernandes (1756).

Joao Fernandes was forced to return to Portugal in 1717. As he did so, he took his four sons along with him. These four sons were the ones who he had with Chica. They were granted noble titles by then the Portuguese Court. The daughters however remained with their mother in the country Brazil. The daughters ended up going to Convent of Macaubas where they learned and grew up. Though her rich husband had gone back to Portuguese, Chika

remained with prestige in Brazil. She was a member to various social groups which were exclusively for the rich and the whites, though she was black and was a well-known slave. Examples of the various social groups she was a member of were Rosario Brotherhood (exclusively for Africans), Mercedes Brotherhood (exclusively for mulattoes) and Do Carmo Sao Fransisco (exclusively for the whites) (Furtado 27).

Chika da Silva died in the year 1796. She was later buried in Fransisco de Assis, a church. The book is interesting for very many reasons. It must be noted that it highlights the issues and problems that discordant couples had. Discordant couples in this context means couples that are of different classes and background. The two protagonists are from way different backgrounds. The man is a white rich and very privileged person. The woman is a black slave born and raised in slavery. The couple not only faces social challenges, but also between themselves (Furtado 30). The love and affection between themselves however give them strength and they end up conquering every challenge they face.

The woman Chika was a symbol of what Brazil called ‘ racial democracy’ (Furtado 31). Nevertheless, many scholars have disputed this. They have maintained that Chika used her feminism to rise in social status and the tools she used were unorthodox. The scholars say she used ‘ miscegenation’ and the connections she had to climb into a higher social status since most Brazilian Africans did the same. Historians like Ferreira Junia say that marriage and concubinage are very many different things. However, he adds that these two tools were used by the Brazilian African slaves used these two tools to change their social position. He states that this was not their only

aim. The other aim was to escape racism. The historian deduces two facts. One, manipulation was a tool used by the Brazilian African women to escape their black identity. He calls it manumission. He says that rather than being the commencement of the formation of a positive black identity, it was the beginning of the acceptance of moral values by the elite. This was done by the white ruling class in order to insert hem (the former slaves), together with their descendants in the society. Two, sex was a tool used as a decisive mechanism to facilitate concubinage and freedom from slavery. As long as an African Brazilian woman got together with a white man, she and members of her immediate family were assured of freedom. Again, once freed, they reduced the stigmatization of African Brazilians and the slavery associated with it. This, they also assured their descendants (Furtado 39).

The chapters of the book explore familial background of the kind of common life that Chika lived before she met with Fernandes. It was just a common life of slaves, full of misery and want. After she met with de Olevreira, her life completely changed for the better. These chapters also look at Fernandes' life before he started his cohabitation with Chika. The decision by Fernandes de Olevreira to buy and free Chika did not only benefit her and her family, but also several other women in Mina Gerais which was then a colony.

Furtado goes ahead to prove that though frowned upon at first, their union later gained acceptance by the both the elite and the society at large. She proves through the various records of accounts she references. This union, she says, was very informal. She gives the fact that some godparents of the couple's children were from both groups. The author provides a description which comes out to be very detailed about Chika's social and material life.

Chica was able to give her daughters the best education by taking them to a religious institution called Macaubas. Formerly a slave herself, she became a property owner and a slave owner as well. The author brings out Chica as a woman of both worlds; the poor and the rich. She acted as a patron of the lower social classes by acting upon their various needs. Besides that, she interacted the higher social classes. She sponsored weddings, hosted various soirees and was a member of other groups of the Diamantino society. In the last days of Chica's life, there were disputes among their children over inheritance and property. Since Fernandes returned abruptly to Portugal, there was no administrator or divider.

Once one of the poorest and ignored people, Chika da Silva became one of the richest and most powerful women in the Brazil society. The author used various sources to write this book. The research done was thorough. Her sources include primary and secondary. Primary sources include word of mouth and interviews while secondary include the written sources. In the beginning of the book, the writer starts her book by the history of the diamond district since Jose Fernandes was a diamond dealer. And this is what gave him the immense wealth and influence he had. She emphatically emphasizes the demographic and social environment of both the protagonists (Furtado 42). Chika being a black slave, she was regarded as nothing. The illegitimate children were seen as a byproduct of her sexual relationship with a white man (Fernandes). The author deftly uses her prowess to write a compelling book about love and struggles associated with couples who are seen to be a mismatch (Furtado 45).

Before writing the book, Ms. Furtado read a lot of books about the subject.

She read historical books and the little literature she got from the archives about the protagonists. The claims she makes in her book arise from not only her opinions, but also from the facts which she came by as she was doing her research. They are therefore verified. The book references sources which when researched are found to be reliable. Her arguments stemming from the subjects of racism, sexuality, manipulation, status and slavery in the eighteenth century are well documented and clearly articulated after the immense research done. The evidence given by the author in this this legend piece of literature is factual (Furtado 50).

The prevailing understanding on the main subjects discussed is rather controversial. Modern slavery is still rampant and racism is still very much practiced both in the United States and even in England, including other international countries. For example, Asians and their Muslim brothers find it a hard task to enter into the western nations, including the U. S. However, the two subjects are not as crucial and intense as they used to be in the eighteenth century. Relationships between different races nowadays are not frowned upon as it used to be in the earlier centuries. In addition, it is also not seen as a ladder to a better social status. For example, nowadays if a white man marries a black woman or vice versa, it will not be as surprising and socially unacceptable as it used to be. In the earlier years, the relationships were condemned because they were seen as a tool by the weaker races to climb the social ladder. But it is not as today. This is because of the equity issue where everyone has been given a chance to improve their personhood.

The book raises many questions. First, Furtado does not give it the emotional

significance as it supposed to be. A book like Chika da Silva which has emotional controversy and passion needs to be worded by expressive words. Second, why did Fernades go back to Portugal? Did he ever return? Did his wife get married again? Very many issues and questions are raised. Furtado is a deft writer. Nevertheless, the book is a not only an academic read but also a pleasurable one.

References

Furtado, J. F. (2009). Chica da Silva: A Brazilian slave of the eighteenth century. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.