

and Colorado State University. In 1999 he retired from a career spent researching and teaching the French novel since 1700; literary theory and criticism; and symbolist, post-symbolist, and contemporary poetry.

Jones likens the work of the scholar to that of the conservationist. Both take pains to preserve what they find on literary and geographic landscapes. "There's a commitment to perpetuation," he says. "You're fostering the possibilities for others to learn and to grow and to nurture."

But conservation efforts need support to succeed, he knows. To sustain the work of cultural preservation, Jones and his wife, Susan, recently donated to the fellowship fund set up in honor of the man whose love of French civilization awed Jones all those years ago. Now that it is partially endowed, the Armand Renaud Fellowship fund will support the educational pursuits of graduate students of French.

Jones was looking for a way, he says, to thank the program that became a turning point in his life. "One of the ways to express that gratitude," he says, "is to donate and encourage future growth."

— *Danny LaChance*

Education without exceptions

Obioma Nnaemeka brings her mother's dream to life

Technically speaking, the year Indiana University professor Obioma Nnaemeka (M.A. '77, Ph.D. '89) took to establish an education fund in Nigeria was a departure from her academic life. Rather than developing syllabi and leading seminars, the recently returned professor spent her last year meeting grateful schoolchildren and navigating the ins and outs of Nigerian nongovernmental organizations. But despite the geographic distance between her African workplace and the Indiana campus, to Nnaemeka, the two couldn't be more closely intertwined.

Back at Indiana, Nnaemeka is a professor of French, women's studies, and African and African diaspora studies. Teaching classes on topics like gender and international development or black women writers, she frequently finds opportunities to incorporate her activism into the classroom.

"I situate my work in what I call a 'third space,'" she says. "A space where one can theorize practice and practice theory at the same time....When I'm doing development and social change work, I'm seeing the theory evolve on the terrain."

Throughout her career, Nnaemeka has seized every opportunity to practice theory, such as in the consulting she's done for the World Bank, various United Nations agencies, the World Health Organization, and many other international NGOs. But it is her most recent project about which she is most passionate.

When Nnaemeka's mother passed away in 2006, she knew immediately what she'd create as a memorial. Although Nnaemeka's mother did not go to college herself, she was passionately committed to helping children—especially girls—get a good education. "She did not discriminate between her male children and her female children," explains Nnaemeka. "To my mom, every child deserves equal access to education."

It was in honor of this commitment that Nnaemeka created the Jessie Obidiegwu Education Fund, which will provide educational scholarships for young women, and establish an innovative educational center in Nnaemeka's mother's village of Agulu in Anambra State, Nigeria. The center will host a gender and women's studies library, a health clinic, a technology training area, classes and conferences, and even a place for scholars to do residencies—a sort of "little Bellagio," as Nnaemeka calls it.

Although Nnaemeka loves her scholarly life, she admits there's a special fulfillment that comes from this sort of social engagement. "When I write a book or I publish articles, my satisfaction comes from a job well done. But

my other work, outside the academy, it brings me joy. When I think of that work, I think of the lives I have touched worldwide; I think of a smile somewhere in Madagascar; I remember a hug somewhere in India. Social change and civil society work touches our humanity in immeasurable ways; it is transforming."

Although Nnaemeka takes great pride in these accomplishments, she is grateful to the individuals who made her own higher education possible. The International Student and Scholar Services office, she recalls, "made the U a wonderful place for international students. We were cared for; we were wanted—any problems, they would go to all ends to solve it for you."

But most of all, Nnaemeka speaks fondly of a departmental mentor that

she continues to speak to on a weekly basis: Armand Renaud, emeritus professor of French. "Renaud practically adopted me," she laughs, adding that his late wife, Madeleine, also played an important role in her life. "Overall, it's just a very nurturing department," she says.

Between Nnaemeka's teaching and her work with the Jessie Obidiegwu Education Fund, the nurturing that started in the French department will surely have ripples for generations to come.

— *Andi McDaniel*



Photo courtesy Obi Nnaemeka