

Boniface I. Obichere Papers: 1959-1996

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Boniface Ihewunwa Obichere (1970)

Abstract

This 29.9 cubic feet collection includes correspondence, notes, and writings of Boniface I. Obichere, a UCLA professor of African history. notebooks, book manuscripts, scholarly journals, letters of recommendation, student papers, course materials, conference papers, reports, grant materials, committee papers, maps, photographs, slides, audio recordings, student and class papers, organizations in which Dr. Obichere participated, particularly the African Studies Center and the *Journal of African Studies*.

Biographical Note

Boniface Ihewunwa Obichere was born on November 4, 1932 in Awaka, Owerri, Nigeria, the son of Ibari Ikeri and Eke Ogbuagu. He attended Roman Catholic primary schools and the local teachers college before working as an elementary school teacher in Nigeria. After resettling in the United States, he received a Bachelor of Arts (1961) and a Masters of Arts (1963) from the University of Minnesota. He married Armer Gean Brown on August 22, 1964, and with her had one son, Chikere Igbolelenwa.

Boniface Obichere earned his D. Phil from Oxford University, England in 1967 and later that year became an acting assistant professor at the University of California at Los Angeles. By 1969 he had earned the rank of associate professor and by 1973 that of full professor. He taught both undergraduate and graduate level African history courses for thirty years and was the advisor to numerous masters and doctoral students.

Obichere specialized in West African history with a particular focus on African military history, African and African-American relations, African political leadership, Pan-Africanism, and the history of Nigeria, Asante, and Dahomey. In addition to numerous articles, book chapters, and reviews, he authored the book *West African States and European Expansion: The Dahomey-Niger Hinterland, 1885-1898* (1971) and edited *Studies in Southern Nigerian History* (1982) and *African States and the Military: Past and Present* (1988).

Obichere also actively participated in UCLA committees and outside organizations that covered his areas of interests. From 1972-1978 he served as the director of the UCLA African Studies Center and afterwards sat on its Faculty Advisory Committee. In 1974, he was the founding editor of the *Journal of African Studies*, a scholarly journal published by the African Studies Center, and in addition, worked on the editorial board of the *Journal of Black Studies*, *AMAN*, *UMOJA: A Scholarly Journal of Black Studies*, and the *Ibadan Humanities Journal*.

He was a member of numerous academic organizations and served as the director of the African Studies Association, and as a board member of such organizations as Operations Crossroads Africa; the L.S.B. Leakey Foundation; the African Institute for the Study of Human Values; and the Association for the Advancement of Policy, Research and Development. He participated in the United Nations Economic Conference for Africa and was also active in charitable causes, such as the Biafra Children's Relief Committee. He was a visiting professor at the University of Hawaii (1969-1970), the University of Ghana (1970-1971), and the University of Ilorin, Nigeria (1979-1980).

During a career that lasted 30 years, Obichere won numerous awards including a 1991 Golden Star Halo Award given by the Southern California Motion Picture Council for his work on a series produced for PBS called "Israel and Black Africa." That same year, the Liberian Studies Association awarded him a lifetime achievement award for his work in African Studies. Boniface Obichere died of prostate cancer six years later on March 14, 1997.

Collection Description

This collection consists of Boniface I. Obichere's professional papers, documenting his career as an UCLA African history professor, an author, and an editor. The papers include correspondence; student and class files; professional reviews and recommendations; papers from various conferences; papers used as editor of the *Journal of African Studies*, with submissions to that journal; and both Obichere's own book manuscripts and those of other authors. The papers also contain material pertaining to UCLA's African Studies Center (now the James S. Coleman African Studies Center), including newsletters, reports, committee papers, grant information, and papers created by various colloquiums and conferences hosted by the Center. The collection documents numerous organizations and committees in which Obichere participated, in particular: the Biafra Children's Relief Committee/Peace in Biafra; the L.S.B Leakey Foundation; Operation Crossroads Africa; UCLA's Committee on International and Comparative Studies; UCLA's Education Abroad Program to Africa and its Ad hoc Advisory Committee; UCLA's Senate Equal Opportunity Committee/Academic Affirmative Action Compliance Committee; and the United Nations Economic Council for Africa, Conference of African Planners. Maps, photographs, postcards, cassette and reel-to-reel tapes are also incorporated. This collection also included a large number of books used by Boniface Obichere relating to Africa and African history. These volumes have been separated and will be made available at the John Henrik Clarke Africana Library at Cornell University.

Additional Resources

Alpers, Edward A. "Coming to America: Boniface Obichere and the Lineage of West African Students in the United States"

<http://slaverebellion.org/index.php?page=boniface-obichere>

Retrieved June 10, 2017 10:34 AM.

Ekechi, Felix K. "Professor Boniface I. Obichere: A Tribute and Remembrance" in *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, vol.29, no.1, 2002, pp.21-42.

Haynes, Karima A. "Historian Gives CSUN African Books, Papers" in *The Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 1997.

Holloway, Joseph E. "The Significance of Dr. Boniface I. Obichere within African Studies U.S. Higher Education Revisited and Beyond".

<http://slaverebellion.org/index.php?page=the-significance-of-dr-boniface>

Retrieved June 10, 2017 10:31 AM.

Holloway, Joseph E. "The Significance of Dr. Boniface L Obichere within African Studies in the US. Higher Education," in *Journal of African Studies*, vol.16, no.1, Winter 1998.

Mukai, Jennifer. Vibrant Memorial Honors Professor. *Daily Bruin*, April 23, 1997.

Williams, Frank B. "Scholar-in-Residence: Teacher's African Works Find Home at CSUN" in *The Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1997.