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PROFESSOR B.A.C OBIEFUNA: A PROFESSOR FOR THE YOUNG MINDS

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Abstract

Professor B.A.C Obiefuna is a distinguished priest, scholar, and educator known for his significant contributions to academia, particularly in the fields of religion, society, and human relations. This essay explores his role as a mentor and educator, highlighting his dedication to shaping the minds of young scholars and his impact on scholarship in his area of expertise.

i. Introduction

Professor B.A.C Obiefuna, a beacon of knowledge and wisdom, has guided countless young minds through the complex terrain of academia. His journey, marked by a profound commitment to his faith and the pursuit of intellectual excellence, is a testament to his dedication. As one of the pioneering academic staff members at the prestigious Department of Religion and Human Relations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, he has demonstrated an enduring passion for scholarly inquiry and the dissemination of knowledge.

This essay takes a deep dive into the life and work of Professor Obiefuna, tracing his journey from his early upbringing to his illustrious academic career that led to his professorship. His story serves as an inspiration to aspiring scholars and educators, and his profound dedication to scholarship has left an indelible mark on the academic landscape, shaping the minds of numerous students and significantly advancing knowledge in his field.

Delving into Professor Obiefuna's legacy reveals the transformative power of his mentorship and education, underscoring the profound impact a dedicated educator can have on their students. His depth of knowledge, clarity of thought, and unwavering commitment to excellence set him apart, making him a true exemplar for the young minds of today and tomorrow.

ii. Early Life and Education

Born to Nwokoye and Ozoaku Obiefuna in June 1954, Prof. Boniface A. C. Obiefuna's journey began in an environment rooted in tradition, family values, and a strong sense of community. Growing up in a nurturing household, he was instilled with principles of humility, kindness, and respect for others from a young age.

His educational journey commenced at St. Mary's Practising School in Agulu, where he received his primary education. This early schooling provided a foundation for his academic pursuits and laid the groundwork for his future endeavours. Continuing his educational journey, Prof. Obiefuna attended All Hallow's Seminary in Onitsha for his secondary education. Here, he not only honed his academic skills but also developed a deep spiritual foundation that would shape his future vocation. Following his secondary education, Prof. Obiefuna proceeded to a major seminary, where he dedicated himself to the rigorous training required for the priesthood. His ordination on July 2, 1983, marked the culmination of years of spiritual and intellectual preparation.



Throughout his academic and spiritual journey, Prof. Obiefuna demonstrated a keen interest in various fields of study. His academic pursuits led him to the esteemed Nnamdi Azikiwe University, where he delved into disciplines such as Political Science (with a focus on International Relations), Religion and Society, and Human Relations.

Beyond his academic pursuits, Prof. Obiefuna's interests were diverse and multifaceted. He developed a passion for Pentecostalism/Charismatism, Conflict and Peace Studies, Public Relations, Organizational Management, Contextual and Inculturation Theology, Evangelization, Ecumenism, and Interreligious Dialogue.

Prof. Obiefuna's upbringing and early experiences instilled in him a deep appreciation for human connection and community. He cultivated hobbies such as reading, singing, and counselling, which reflected his commitment to personal growth, self-expression, and the well-being of others. Known for his warm and approachable demeanor, Prof. Obiefuna effortlessly connected with individuals from all walks of life. His humility, friendliness, and down-to-earth nature endeared him to both young and old, earning him a reputation as a man of the people. Prof. Boniface A. C. Obiefuna's early life and upbringing were characterised by a strong foundation of faith, family values, and community spirit. His journey from humble beginnings to academic and spiritual fulfillment exemplifies a life dedicated to service, learning, and the pursuit of excellence.

iii. Role as a Mentor

1. **Guidance and Support:** Professor B.A.C Obiefuna serves as a guiding light for young scholars, providing them with invaluable advice, encouragement, and support as they navigate their academic and professional journeys. His wealth of experience and wisdom enables him to offer insights into various aspects of academia, including research methodologies, publication strategies, and career development opportunities.
2. **Inspiration and Motivation:** As a mentor, Professor Obiefuna inspires and motivates young scholars to strive for excellence in their academic pursuits. Through his own achievements and dedication to scholarship, he sets a high standard for intellectual rigour and scholarly integrity, encouraging his mentees to pursue their passions with zeal and determination.
3. **Role Modeling:** Professor Obiefuna leads by example, serving as a role model for aspiring scholars through his commitment to academic excellence, professionalism, and ethical conduct. His exemplary work ethic, dedication to teaching, and passion for knowledge instil in his mentees a sense of purpose and direction, inspiring them to emulate his success.
4. **Networking and Connections:** As a well-respected figure in academia, Professor Obiefuna leverages his extensive network of contacts and connections to create opportunities for his mentees. Whether through introductions to fellow scholars, invitations to conferences and seminars, or recommendations for academic programs and funding opportunities, he facilitates valuable networking opportunities that can advance the careers of young scholars.
5. **Personal and Professional Development:** Professor Obiefuna takes a holistic approach to mentorship, focusing not only on the academic and professional development of his mentees but also on their personal growth and well-being. He provides a supportive environment where mentees feel empowered to explore their interests, overcome

challenges, and develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed in academia and beyond.

6. **Long-Term Relationship:** Mentorship with Professor Obiefuna is not just a short-term arrangement but a long-term relationship built on trust, mutual respect, and ongoing communication. He remains accessible and approachable to his mentees, offering guidance and encouragement at every stage of their academic and professional journey and celebrating their successes along the way.

iv. Contributions to Scholarship

Professor B.A.C Obiefuna has made significant contributions to scholarship in the field of religion, society, and human relations through his extensive research, publications, and academic engagements. His scholarly endeavours have enriched academic discourse, advanced knowledge, and inspired critical thinking among scholars and students alike.

1. **Research Pioneering:** Professor Obiefuna's research has pioneered new perspectives and insights into the intersection of religion, society, and human relations. His studies delve into complex issues such as religious pluralism, social justice, ethics, and interfaith dialogue, shedding light on their implications for contemporary society.
2. **Publication Portfolio:** With a prolific publication portfolio spanning both local and international literature, Professor Obiefuna's works exhibit the depth and clarity of a seasoned scholar. His articles, books, and essays are characterised by rigorous scholarship, meticulous analysis, and innovative perspectives, making them essential reading for scholars and researchers in the field.
3. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Professor Obiefuna's scholarship adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing insights from fields such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and theology. By synthesizing diverse perspectives and methodologies, he offers a holistic understanding of complex social phenomena and cultural dynamics, contributing to the interdisciplinary dialogue within academia.
4. **Engagement with Contemporary Issues:** Through his scholarship, Professor Obiefuna engages with pressing contemporary issues confronting society, such as religious extremism, social inequality, environmental ethics, and globalization. His research not only explores the theoretical dimensions of these issues but also provides practical insights and ethical frameworks for addressing them in real-world contexts.
5. **Academic Leadership:** As one of the pioneer academic staff of the prestigious Department of Religion and Human Relations at Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Professor Obiefuna has played a pivotal role in shaping the department's academic agenda and research priorities. His leadership and mentorship have fostered a culture of excellence, intellectual rigour, and scholarly collaboration among faculty and students.

v. Legacy and Influence

1. **Academic Excellence:** Professor B.A.C. Obiefuna's legacy is marked by his unwavering commitment to academic excellence. Through his meticulous research, insightful publications, and dedication to teaching, he has set a high standard for scholarship in the field of religion, society, and human relations. His work serves as a

- benchmark for aspiring scholars and continues to shape the academic discourse in his area of expertise.
2. **Mentorship and Guidance:** One of Professor Obiefuna's most enduring legacies is his role as a mentor and guide to countless students and young scholars. His approachable demeanor, depth of knowledge, and genuine interest in the success of his mentees has left an indelible mark on their academic and professional journeys. Many of his former students credit him with providing invaluable guidance, encouragement, and support that have propelled them to success in their careers.
 3. **Intellectual Leadership:** As one of the pioneer academic staff members of the Department of Religion and Human Relations at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Professor Obiefuna has played a pivotal role in shaping the direction of the department and influencing its academic programs. His leadership, vision, and commitment to excellence have helped establish the department as a hub of scholarly activity and a center for interdisciplinary research in the field of religion and society.
 4. **Community Engagement:** Beyond academia, Professor Obiefuna's influence extends to the broader community through his involvement in various social and religious initiatives. As a dedicated priest of the Catholic Church, he has been actively involved in pastoral work, community development projects, and interfaith dialogue efforts, fostering understanding, cooperation, and social cohesion among diverse groups.
 5. **Inspiration and Legacy:** Professor Obiefuna's legacy serves as an inspiration to current and future generations of scholars, educators, and community leaders. His passion for knowledge, commitment to service, and dedication to excellence serve as a model for aspiring intellectuals seeking to make a positive impact in their respective fields. As his influence continues to reverberate through the academic community and beyond, Professor Obiefuna's legacy will endure as a testament to the transformative power of education, mentorship, and scholarly inquiry.

Professor B.A.C. Obiefuna's legacy and influence on the young generation of scholars extend far beyond his academic achievements. As a mentor, educator, and role model, he has left an indelible mark on the minds and careers of countless students, inspiring them to pursue excellence and make meaningful contributions to society.

One of Professor Obiefuna's greatest legacies is his unwavering commitment to mentorship. He has dedicated himself to nurturing the intellectual and personal growth of young scholars, providing guidance, encouragement, and support at every step of their academic journey. Through his mentorship, he has instilled in them a passion for learning, a commitment to critical thinking, and a sense of responsibility to use their knowledge for the betterment of humanity.

Moreover, Professor Obiefuna's influence on the young generation of scholars extends beyond the classroom. His exemplary scholarship and profound insights have served as a source of inspiration and guidance for aspiring academics, challenging them to push the boundaries of knowledge and engage in rigorous intellectual inquiry. By setting high standards of academic excellence and demonstrating the value of interdisciplinary research, he has shaped the research agendas and scholarly pursuits of many young scholars.

Furthermore, Professor Obiefuna's influence on the young generation of scholars extends to his embodiment of ethical values and principles. As a priest and educator, he has exemplified integrity, compassion, and humility in his interactions with students and colleagues. His commitment to social justice and human dignity has inspired young scholars

to use their academic pursuits as a means of effecting positive change in their communities and beyond.

vi. Conclusion

In conclusion, Professor B.A.C Obiefuna stands as a beacon of excellence in academia, embodying the values of dedication, scholarship, and mentorship. Through his illustrious career as a priest, scholar, and educator, he has not only advanced our understanding of religion, society, and human relations but has also nurtured and inspired countless young minds. Professor Obiefuna's legacy extends far beyond the pages of his publications; it lives on in the hearts and minds of the students and scholars he has mentored and influenced. As we reflect on his contributions to academia and his profound impact on shaping the next generation of scholars, we are reminded of the invaluable role that mentorship plays in fostering intellectual growth and development. Professor Obiefuna's commitment to excellence and his unwavering dedication to the pursuit of knowledge serves as a timeless example for aspiring scholars everywhere, inspiring us to continue his legacy of scholarship, integrity, and service to humanity.

Let the little kids, the youth, old men and women hum a song for Rev. Fr. Professor B A C Obiefuna and I will gladly sing along, in praise of his virtues and all that he does!
Jide ka I ji!