

SCHOLAR, FATHER, AND FRIEND: A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR JUSTICE T. MODIBO OCRAN

Edward L. Gilbert¹

While we are mourning the loss of our friend, others are rejoicing to meet him behind the veil.*

Last November, the Akron community lost a dear friend. For twenty years, he was a faculty member at the University of Akron School of Law, teaching students the intricacies of international and corporate law. His name was Tawia Modibo Ocran, and he was one of the smartest men I have ever met. Born and educated in Ghana, Professor Ocran brought to the classroom a unique perspective; he inspired generations of students with his real-life experiences and understanding of international global issues. He had an impressive, detailed knowledge of international issues and never ceased to amaze me with his ability to humanize those issues. He was an honest intellectual with experiences that gave him the unique ability to teach the law from a humanitarian perspective, a perspective which served his students well and made him one of the most fascinating faculty members ever to have taught international issues at Akron.

Despite his renowned education, which included two law degrees, a master's degree, and a doctorate, Professor Ocran had a delightfully personal manner about him. He and I would laugh for hours in his home as he regaled me with stories and jokes about the political climate of the country and the world. His wife, Adelaide, was a wonderful cook and his five children were a dear blessing to their marriage. It wasn't long

¹ Special thanks to Martin Belsky, William Jordan, Margery Koosed, Dana Cole, J. Dean Carro, and William Rich for their helpful comments.

* John Taylor.

after I met Professor Ocran that I realized what a proud husband and father he was.

During his time at Akron, Professor Ocran influenced nearly everyone he met, which is why there were mixed feelings when President John Kufuor, appointed him to the Ghana Supreme Court. In 2004, to the Akron community's simultaneous joy and dismay, Professor Ocran was sworn in as a justice in the Supreme Court of Ghana. While I admired his desire to use the law to effect change in his home country, I worried that the Akron community would lose this brilliant mind and person whom we had grown to love and respect. To my great joy, the University of Akron School of Law honored Professor Ocran later that year by making him the first holder of the Gilbert Jurist-in-Residence Chair. As the Jurist-in-Residence, Professor Ocran returned to Akron each year to teach during the recess of the Ghana Court.

I was honored to support his return to Akron each year, and it was my delight to attend the lectures he gave at the University of Akron. His passing in November 2008 was a loss borne by the entire Akron community. I lost not only a friend of almost two decades, but a special mentor whose humanity and intellect inspired me throughout our friendship. His life will continue to be an inspiration for the rest of mine. May I live up to his example.

Fare well, my brother. I will see you in another life.