

THIS IS ONEIDA SHOWING GRATITUDE

Among the Yoruba-speaking people of Nigeria, expressing appreciation, giving thanks, is of great importance. One of their ancient proverbs puts it this way: *Ẹni tí a ẹ̀ lóore tí kò dúpẹ́, bí ọlọ́sà-á kóni ẹ̀ rù ni.* “A person to whom one does a favor but who shows no gratitude is like a robber who has stolen one’s goods.” In other words, ingratitude is comparable to robbery in that one person takes something from another without paying anything for it – not even a word of thanks. In Luke 17:11-19 Jesus Himself marveled that only one of the ten lepers He healed actually came back to express their thanks to Him, and in His own speech and actions Jesus modeled an attitude of thanksgiving toward God (Mt. 11:25) and expressed His appreciation for those who assisted Him in His ministry with a promise of future rewards (Lk. 11:28-30).

For many years, in our society and at OBI, it has been the custom to recognize teachers and the importance of their work in the lives of youngsters. At Oneida, our principal calls each individual teacher to the platform during an extended chapel service, comments briefly on that teacher’s unique contributions and abilities, and presents him/her with a token of appreciation. It is not uncommon – nor is it inappropriate – that as a teacher’s name is mentioned a group of students will jump to their feet, loudly cheering and boisterously clapping for their especially-beloved teacher as others join in with hearty applause. To be honest, it is one of the highlights of a teacher’s year to hear the noise made in their honor and receive that all-too-small but honestly-heartfelt gift accompanied by a hearty handshake or a friendly hug.

This year, we took a second step in encouraging our students to appreciate the work which is done on their behalf outside the academic day. We not only had an Academic Team Appreciation Day, but two days later we also had a Non-Academic Team Appreciation Day. We wanted to impress on the students that all the adults who surround them on the campus are an important part of the ministry of Christ toward them. As I tried to point out to the students as I called our non-academic ministry team forward one by one, if these people didn’t serve, we wouldn’t have OBI. Imagine if there were no cooks to prepare the food for everyone. Imagine if the farm didn’t raise almost all our beef and pork. Imagine if there were no one to remodel or repair our facilities or to beautify the campus. Imagine if there were no houseparents in the dormitories, working to ensure students’ safety, helping them in study hall, listening to their fears, drying their tears. Imagine if there were no healthcare providers on campus when we have medical issues. Imagine if there were no one to take care of their admissions or transportation needs. Imagine if there were no one to purchase materials, pay bills, process the donations, or coordinate the volunteers whose donated service helps to keep their school fees the lowest of any boarding school in the country. Our students got the point; we all did. All who serve are important; all deserve thanks.



Dr. Paul Davidson
President, Oneida Baptist Institute

*First printed in the Western Recorder May 21, 2013.
Reprinted with the permission of the Western Recorder.*