

**Bonner Center Dedication Speech**  
**Adetokunbo Adeshile ('09)**

Good day,

I have been granted the right to speak about the importance of the Bonner program on behalf of Earlham Bonners past and present. I must say that, to speak on behalf of all Bonners, is no small task as we all have had our own myriad of experiences that ranges as far as our personalities and interests. Some of us have worked with the elderly, with mentoring youth and others with the environment. Many of us have gone abroad, combining our passions with the skills that we have learned through this *very* program to assist other communities, making us therein *global citizens*.

Therefore, perhaps it is fair to say that this Bonner program has allowed us to fulfill the challenge I see set before me every day that I walk into this building, the challenge to “Engage with a changing world”. To go one step further, we are challenged to passionately engage with a changing world, allowing our “deepest joys to connect with the world’s deepest hungers.”

This Bonner program has, with its commitment to community and sensitivity to the value of all people, allowed us Bonners, through service to connect deeply with the persons and communities we assist. This engagement, oftentimes, brings new discoveries not only of the world, but of our own identities.

I have been privileged to do service in a range of areas, oftentimes as a mentor to children and a teacher of English to adult immigrants. Perhaps one of *the most influential experiences* that I have had, has been working in a low income housing complex as a mentor. There, I became, for the children, a role model. I became as they affectionately say, “their ninja”. I presented an image that the children would be interested in, an image that I found out, I could use as a way to convey many positive life aspects. Think about it, if you were working with over 15 children, in ages ranging from 3 to 11, would it not be useful and important to suggest the idea of “stealthy quiet”, “respect” and the need to “put forward good effort” in all that you do?

I became, for them a superhero. But the truth is, they are my heroes. My ability to work with these children has given me meaning during my experience here at Earlham College. It is what lifts my spirits when the complexities of life try to bring them down. I have no choice but to keep fighting for good things in life, because these children look up to me.

As I have watched these children grow and have been privileged to see their vast potential I have come upon another realization, more than the point that I love children and find them amazingly interesting. But, the point that I, myself, am a teacher at heart. I wish to see every person reach their full potential.

But I must say, imagine, that I at age 22 have found such meaning? Imagine that, times 60 Bonners, over many years past, and now for many years to come. This is what Bonner is about: helping people reach their full potential through service-learning.