

“AN INDIANA CENTRAL ALUMNUS REMEMBERS:
PHYSICIAN EXEMPLARS OF “EDUCATION FOR SERVICE”

By James Brunnermer '65



Moses Musa Mahoi '50
Henry Martinez '51



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In the final chapter of his memoir *Distinction Without Pretension: The Little School that Did* (Nineveh, IN: First Books, 2003), Dr James Brunner identifies several heroes who, in his judgment, “represent the hundreds of dedicated servants from Indiana Central who have contributed toward making life better for those around them” (389). Like other students at Indiana Central during the 1950s and 1960s, Jim was impressed by the remarkable lives of Dr. Moses Musa Mahoi ’50, who served in war-torn Sierra Leone, and Dr. Henry Martinez ’51, whose work at the McCurdy School and the Española Hospital in New Mexico would inspire many others to pursue vocations in medicine and nursing. We are grateful to Jim for permission to include these two “profiles” from the chapter titled “Are There No More Heroes” in *Distinction Without Pretension*.

DR. MOSES MUSA MAHOI '50 AND THE MISSION TO SIERRA LEONE

Children of the Depression, Indiana Central graduate Charles Leader '35 and his wife located in Sierra Leone, Africa, to serve as missionaries for the United Brethren Church. During their term of service there, they met a bright teenager whose desire was to become a healer for his people. The Reverend Mr. Leader made the appropriate contacts and encouraged Moses Musa Mahoi to attend Indiana Central College. The young African arrived at his new home in Indianapolis in the late summer of 1946. An outstanding student, Moses' enchanting smile, sense of humor, and kind presence captivated his classmates among whom was Louise Dragoo (Barnett).

“Moses was so bright and funny,” Mrs. Barnett recalled recently. “I recall the first time he saw snow, and how he went outside to roll around in this new phenomenon.”

He was extolled by the late Dr. Robert Brooker as “the best lab assistant I ever had.”

After graduation Mahoi studied medicine at Columbia University and at the Cleveland Medical School, later earning his degree in London, England. He eventually returned to his native land of Freetown, Sierra Leone, to practice medicine.

Named a Distinguished Alumnus of Indiana Central in 1971, Moses occasionally visited his alma mater. Following one such visit in 1995, Dr. Mahoi wrote to friends Don and Esther Fleener. One can almost hear Moses chuckling as he reminisced about the very different university he returned to:

“[I] recall my short visits in your home and was really amazed at the changes at ICC. Co-educational dormitories? I am sure that Miss Cravens will flip in her grave. What will Miss Huey do? And “Andy,” our mascot, will bark at anyone holding hands . . . And for that matter, using words—dance, drinks, rather than folk game and Cokes...time and tide waits for no man, ICC keeps marching on!”

In the 1990s, Dr. Mahoi was the chief physician at a mining company when a deadly civil war broke out in Sierra Leone. His friends in Indiana were concerned for his safety at the hands of the rebels. Despite the fact that danger lurked within the civil distress in his country, Dr. Mahoi left the mining company to establish a family clinic treating the poor and needy.

With buildings burning and explosions rocking Freetown, Moses and his family lived above his clinic, where indigent tribe members would come for medical attention. As the number of patients with war injuries increased dramatically, Dr. Mahoi worked from sunrise to sunset for years. It was during that time that he suffered great fatigue and finally diagnosed himself as having prostate cancer. He returned to the U.S. for a brief time for surgery but hurried quickly back to Sierra Leone and his patients.

From that same letter to the Fleeners, Dr. Mahoi described his family clinic:

"[I] have a group of patients who cannot afford the necessary medical care . . . I class[ify] them as D.F.G. (Do for God), the Creole expression which means do it in the name of God. And I still recall in our Chapel devotion [at Indiana Central] and doing my year of seminary before I went to medical school 'that which you have done for the least of these, you have done it for me' [Matthew 25:40b].

"All of this confirms the basis of my highest convictions: medicine is an art and not necessarily a science as much as I had the Western-type of medical education. I continue to respect the traditional healer and through the years, I have had the satisfaction of the Golden Rule, a satisfaction of helping others to help themselves. *This is a great hobby!*"

As the bloody civil war surged around and through the capital city, Moses ignored his deteriorating condition (there were no other qualified physicians in the area), choosing not to return to the U.S. for check-ups. He ignored his own malignancy because he was too busy with his patients. Moses Mahoi continued to work at an unbending pace until he was no longer mobile. Toward the end of his life, family and friends would carry Dr. Mahoi on a pallet every day from his second-floor bedroom down the stairs to his clinic, where he continued to administer to the suffering. Angela Allie, sister of Moses' wife, Elizabeth, noted that Dr. Mahoi literally "worked himself to death."

After her husband died in 1998, Elizabeth Mahoi continued the clinic in Moses' name, catering to the grass roots community unable to afford medical care elsewhere.

— *Distinguished Alumnus Award 1971*



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DR. HENRY MARTINEZ '51 AND THE MISSION OF MCCURDY SCHOOL

A child of Hispanic parents, Henry Martinez was born in the small village of Vallecitos in the arid and hardscrabble land of north-central New Mexico. Martinez attended the McCurdy School, a boarding institution in Española, New Mexico, that was founded and supported in part by Evangelical United Brethren Church missions. McCurdy was established to provide opportunity in education for Native Americans and Hispanics.

After high school, Martinez traveled to Indianapolis to accept an academic scholarship at Indiana Central College. He was followed later to ICC by brother John Martinez '54 and sister Carlotta Martinez Thompson '56. While at ICC Henry studied under Dr. William P. Morgan, who found him to be a bright and eager learner. After he graduated *cum laude* in 1951, Henry received Dr. Morgan's recommendation to the Indiana University Medical School. Martinez earned his MD degree there in 1956.

After an internship and residency in general surgery at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Dr. Martinez studied in the relatively new field of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at the U of T Southwestern Medical School in Dallas.

Once serving on a surgical team led by the eminent Dr. Michael DeBakke in Houston, Dr. Martinez later developed revolutionary new techniques to improve open-heart surgery. His interest in thoracic surgery, which at the time was both risky and not fully explored, led him ultimately to the Medical Center in Amarillo, Texas, not far from his boyhood home.

It was at Amarillo that Dr. Martinez applied for one of the limited number of heart-lung machines available at that time. The heart-lung contraption did the work of the patient's organs during open-heart surgery. After a series of frustrating failures in securing one of the very few machines available, Dr. Martinez and fellow surgeon Dr. W. R. Klingensmith purchased the apparatus themselves, setting it up in Dr. Martinez's garage. With Dr. Martinez's wife Ann, an RN, operating the mechanism, Henry and Dr. Klingensmith practiced on dogs and other small animal in the makeshift O.R. at home to perfect their skills, prior to putting the technology to use on humans.

On October 14, 1964, Dr. Martinez performed the first successful operation, using the heart-lung machine in Amarillo on twenty-one-year-old Richard Bills. From that initial surgical procedure, Henry Martinez introduced the first thoracic surgery program in the Southwest. Thousands of lives were saved and prolonged through the tireless work of this graduate of ICC.

Dr. Henry Martinez, honored as a Distinguished Alumnus of Indiana Central in 1976, was forced to stop practicing in 1992 after being struck by amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. He would die seven years later.

Four of Dr. Martinez's five daughters became physicians, emulating their beloved father in his dedication to serving others.

— Distinguished Alumnus Award 1976



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Moses Musa Mahoi '50 & Henry Martinez '51

- A (p. 50) Moses Musa Mahoi & Henry Martinez (first row on right side) with classmates at Indiana Central College on steps of Buxton Hall with “dorm mother” Rev. Ida Cunningham. From *The Oracle* (1950). Photograph used with permission of the Frederick D. Hill Archives of the University of Indianapolis.
- B (p. 51) Moses Musa Mahoi. Photograph from the Alumni Files of the Frederick D. Hill Archives of the University of Indianapolis.
- C (p. 51) Moses Musa Mahoi with group of Indiana Central students from *The Oracle* (1950). Photograph used with permission of the Frederick D. Hill Archives of the University of Indianapolis.
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