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### From the "Ouachitonian": Donnie Copeland

Abby Leal

*Ouachita Baptist University*

Ouachita News Bureau

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**From the "Ouachitonian": Donnie Copeland**

*By Abby Leal*

June 21, 2021

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Donnie Copeland had an unconventional upbringing. He grew up over 6,000 miles away from the United States in Ogbomosho, Nigeria. His parents taught at a local seminary and did mission work, such as traveling to remote villages to connect with local churches.

“In a way you’re just there to support that village,” said Copeland. “You’re there supporting the work of a local pastor.”

Copeland fondly remembers his time spent in Ogbomosho floating down river through a rainforest, buying pineapple out of a car window from street side vendors, and picking up words from the local Igbo and Yoruba languages.

When it came time to choose a college, Copeland made an unusual choice. He wanted to attend Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., to study studio art.

“All of the flights to get to Nigeria went through Europe, so I got to go to Europe several times as a small kid and see art and architecture,” said Copeland. “I think that had an impact on why I chose to do what I’m doing. Art didn’t seem like something foreign or weird or impossible.”

After Ouachita, Copeland earned his master’s degree in art and went on to teach kindergarten through 12th grade art. He thought he was settled in southern Missouri until he was asked to return to Ouachita to teach.

“We think Arkadelphia is a great place to call home,” said Copeland. “There are opportunities here to be close to nature, and you can take advantage of what the universities have to offer.”

Though Copeland’s surroundings were dramatically different in Arkansas, he hadn’t forgotten what an amazing place Nigeria is.

“I don’t think we should be afraid to go explore the world,” said Copeland. “I think we find more often that people are more like us than different from us.”

*Photo by Danielle Sourber*