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## IWU Professor Njeri Mbugua Premieres New Book

February 11, 2005

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.- Njeri Mbugua, assistant professor of sociology at Illinois Wesleyan, is the author of a novel, *JOKI: When Elephants Fight, The Grass Suffers*, which is set in her native Kenya and the United Kingdom.

Published by Pleasant Word, a division of Wine Press Publishing of Enumclaw, Washington, Mbugua's novel is the story of an abandoned orphan, who dreams of doing something with her life, and her devoted foster-father, Mr. Tembo. After receiving his engineering degree and working in England, Tembo returns to Kenya to head a multinational engineering company. As Tembo is propelled into wealth, fighting erupts between him and his wife and his clan, devastating Joki.

The novel is based on experiences people shared with Mbugua while she was completing her master's thesis at Indiana University. "There isn't any one person that would say 'this is my story' but somebody will identify with the characters," said Mbugua who uses the book as supplementary reading material in her classes as a tool to dispel any misconceptions that her students might have about Africa.

Mbugua said she seeks to expose in her book the rarely discussed affluent side of African society where children are chauffeured to private schools, and watchmen protect mansion-dwellers from their countrymen ravaged by AIDS, famine and poverty. However, she uses the characters to demonstrate that there is more to an individual than their economic class. "One of the things I show in the book is that corruption in itself can be used-corruption can be a means to getting somewhere," Mbugua said.

Mbugua, who was born in Kenya, received her B.A. in social work from the University of Nairobi in 1987 and her Ph. D. from Indiana University in 1999. She joined the Illinois Wesleyan faculty in 1999 and is known for her presentations on the topics of HIV/AIDS in Africa, Christianity in non-western cultures, and divorce and single-motherhood.

*JOKI* is dedicated to Mbugua's grandmother, grandfather and daughter..

The book was introduced to the Illinois Wesleyan campus as a presentation and signing on Feb. 11 with part of the proceeds for sales going to children orphaned by the recent tsunami. The book is also available at Illinois Wesleyan's bookstore in the Hansen Student Center, 300 Beecher St., Bloomington and may also be purchased by contacting at (309) 556-3432 or by e-mail at [nmbugua@iwu.edu](mailto:nmbugua@iwu.edu).



Njeri Mbugua