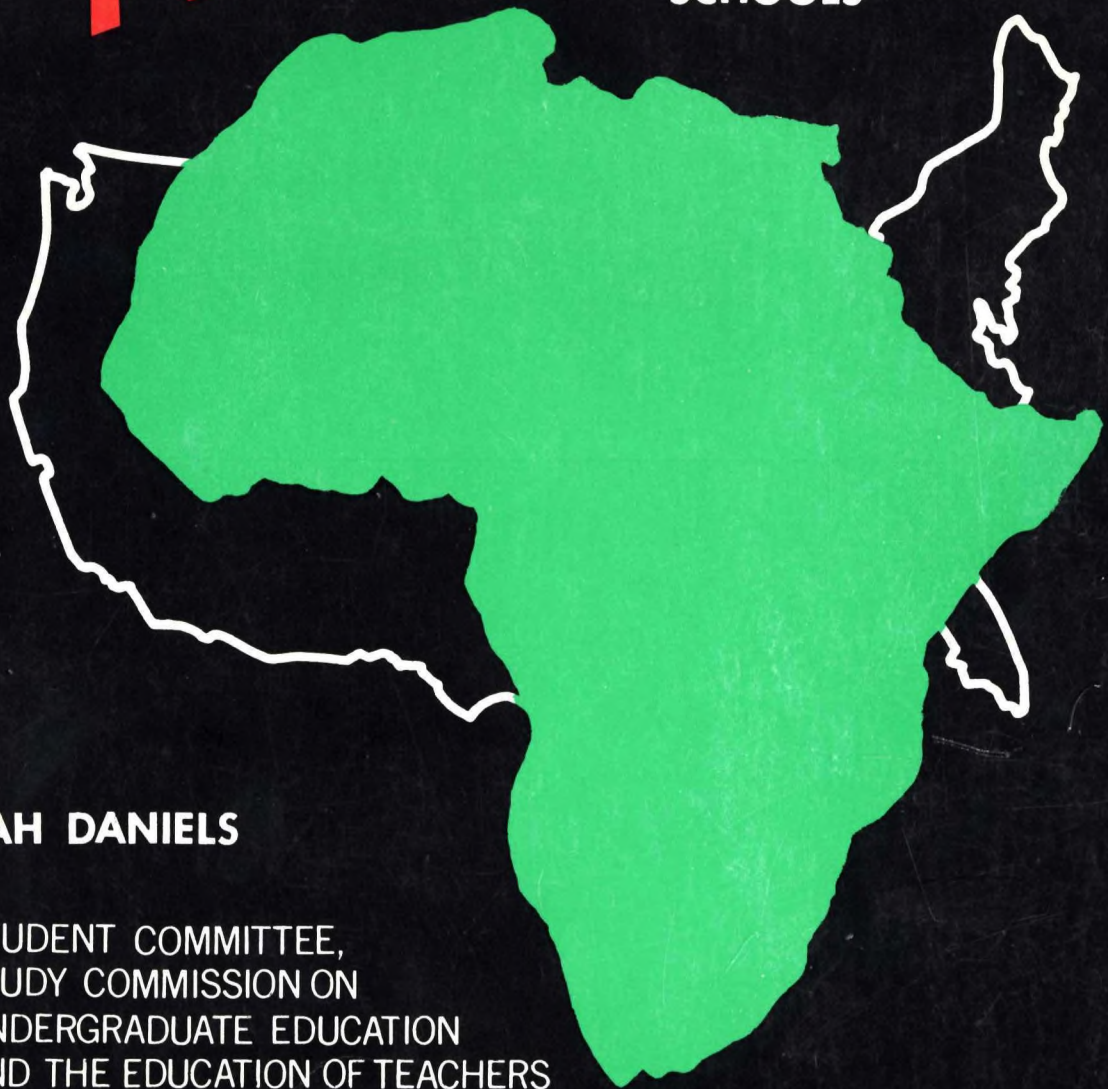


EDUCATION BY, FOR AND ABOUT

**AFRICAN
AMERICANS**

**A PROFILE OF SEVERAL
BLACK COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS**



DEBORAH DANIELS

STUDENT COMMITTEE,
STUDY COMMISSION ON
UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION
AND THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

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NAIROBI DAY AND HIGH SCHOOLS, INCORPORATED

--Barbara Mouton, Administrator

Nairobi Day and High Schools, Incorporated, is located approximately 40 miles south of San Francisco at the southernmost tip of San Mateo County in an unincorporated area called East Palo Alto by some and Nairobi by others; the area has no official name.

Our school system extends from pre-school through high school. At the present time, the student complement is totally Black although any child who can benefit from the Nairobi environment is welcome, regardless of race, creed, or national origin. In grades kindergarten through high school, 22 children are from middle-income families and 23 are from low-income ones; in the pre-school all the children are from low-income families. There are 40 children in the pre-school and 45 in grades kindergarten through high school, making a total of 85 children.

The Day School (name later changed to Nairobi Day and High School, Incorporated) was founded with courage and conviction. It was founded out of desperate need. The public schools and public education were not instruments in facilitating social and economic mobility for children in this Black community. Believing intensely that their children could learn, a group of mothers in 1966 formed a Saturday supplementary school to narrow the gap between the children's actual performances and demonstrated potentials. The emphasis was upon developing self-confidence and improving skills in the areas of reading and mathematics. The high school, a five-day-a-week operation, came into being in April, 1969, and the elementary component followed in September of that same year.

In the beginning it was difficult to obtain facilities for the Saturday school. This was resolved by purchasing property (still paying the mortgages) and remodeling structures into educational facilities. Money has always been a problem. We receive no federal or state monies for operations. We still conduct a Saturday school for children from the area public schools; this is provided free of cost to the students.

The secondary school is a recognized candidate for accreditation. We applied to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in Burlingame and merely followed procedures.

System is Black-Controlled

The Nairobi School System is unique. It is Black controlled and based upon the needs and aspirations of Black people. Its success is based upon Black people exercising their rights and responsibilities in the education of their children. When a student leaves Nairobi he should know (1) who he is; (2) where he is; and (3) why he is who he is. A student should (will) have a positive self-image; a positive identification with the community; self-direction, self-discipline and resourcefulness; will have developed the ability to take advantage of all opportunities; and, consequently, will dedicate and gear his academic life to the improvement of his community.

The Nairobi School System has 23 staff members, as follows:

Director--responsible for over-all program--a major portion of time is spent in raising funds for schools' operation

Administrators (3)

Pre-school--directs program and teaches

Elementary--coordinates elementary school and is responsible for schools' fiscal program; helps to raise funds, also

Secondary---coordinates high school and teaches three classes; will help to raise funds, also; is student counselor

Instructors (5 full-time)

Pre-school 2

Elementary 3

primary--grades first through third

intermediate--grades fourth through sixth

kindergarten

Instructors (12 part-time)

Pre-school 2

Elementary 1 (art)

Secondary 9

law and government, economics, mathematics, social sciences, English, physical sciences, leadership, agriculture; there are two instructors in the law and government class and one instructor in each of the other classes

Librarian (part-time)

School Pianist (plays at the motivational assembly each morning and at school functions and fund-raisers)

Because of the nature of our school and its grass-roots origin, we are intimately involved with the community; some staff and trustee positions are held by parents of children in the school.

Staff Must Be Flexible

The staff must be able to teach and must be very flexible. They must be able to move from the book to the broom. They must be committed and hold positive expectations for their students. Our staff and board, Black-directed and controlled, is multiracial. Teachers do not have to have credentials, although the majority do. It is imperative that they be able to teach, though.

We start off our school year with an intensive pre-service period either in the summer or during the two weeks immediately preceding the opening of school in the fall. Before Saturday school starts each year, we have two or three all-day workshops for teachers and tutors.

Generally the Board of Trustees' executive committee makes the staff selection. In order to be considered, an aspiring teacher fills out an application and is interviewed. If there is a vacant slot and the committee feels it is in its best interests to hire that particular person, it becomes a fait accompli. All except one of our full-time staff is paid; four of our part-time staff is paid.

The Nairobi Schools were founded with the belief that the earlier a child's formal educational process begins, if the school is cognizant of and involves the totality of forces molding a child's experiences, the more successful it will be for the student. Therefore, our curriculum is an ever-evolving, academically-oriented process. It is designed to assist the student in developing the self-confidence, skills, and tools he needs to make a worthwhile, humane contribution to his community. In this environment, the pre-school child soon discovers "It is good to be me!" He is encouraged to share with others; he is assisted in developing the necessary abilities to look, listen, and learn. This is the beginning of an awareness that one uses what he's got to get what he needs. Emphasis is given to forming meaningful links between different learning areas and promoting good physical and mental habits for survival.

The young students in the elementary school are so inculcated with the idea "we can learn" it becomes an integral part of them forever after. In this non-competitive environment, students really grasp and utilize the concepts "Each one, teach one" and "He's not heavy; he's my brother." We teach reading and mathematics at the kindergarten level.

Education for Survival

The educational process assists the older student in dedicating and gearing his academic life to the high-priority needs of his community. The emphasis is on education for survival. Having been a part of the Nairobi Family for a while, he recognizes the purpose of learning is to help his family, school, and community, not to out-do others or develop one-upmanship. Consequently, his measurement of success is based on contributions to family, school, and community, rather than individual accomplishment. Specific areas include: reading, writing, mathematics, communication skills, French and Spanish, social science, the physical sciences, community service, history, Black history, Black literature and poetry, music, counseling, family living, law and government, economics, English, and physical education.

Nairobi encourages non-competitive teaching techniques; teachers develop methods that allow students to assist one another rather than compete against one another. The results of non-competitive teaching: helps to build identity; builds sense of security and confidence; cuts down on fighting and the need for one-upmanship; results in teacher using phrase, "Should you be doing that?" instead of "Don't!"--gives person chance to weigh alternatives and develop own judgement; allows students to be more receptive through conditioning (you list behavior objectives and then condition students to internalize them). At Nairobi a teacher must live by precepts and examples--you can't teach that which you don't know, and can't lead where you don't go; a teacher must be accountable for his actions; a teacher must believe in a student's potential for success.

Curriculum and methodology address themselves to our goals succinctly, explicitly, and ebonicentrically!* The result is a culture-laden, evolving process, based on community needs where students have opportunities to observe, explore, examine, and manipulate information. Process is matched with goal.

The requirements are few: a student must show signs of agreeing with and benefitting from the Nairobi environment by the end of the first six weeks after entrance; he must be serious about academic achievement; he must respect himself and others; and he must meet whatever class requirements the instructor stipulates.

*Ebonicentric--based upon the needs and aspirations of Black people.

Good Community Relationship

Parents and/or community members are integral parts of the school, serving as staff and board members, participating in the decisions determining school policy and operation. Nairobi Day Schools, Inc., has a very good relationship with many community agencies, particularly the public schools. Members of the Nairobi Family were involved in establishing some of these agencies, for example, The Charles Drew Health Center, Nairobi College, and several of the area churches. Members of our schools' evaluation committee are public school educators, for the most part; one is county superintendent of schools, another is superintendent of the large unified school district contiguous to this area, and two are members of public school boards of trustees; one member of this same committee is director of a large private school close by. This year, we have students from the local high school enrolled in our economics law and government class. We see our school providing a positive competitive model for the public schools, thereby breaking the monopolistic grasp those same schools have on the children of this community. Most of our contacts with other community institutions are direct, personal ones, made in person and/or phone.

As one parent succinctly stated, "Nairobi changed midnight into day for my children." Again and again children manifesting an increase in self-confidence and academic skills prove that whatever we are attempting to do here works. Each year in May when we test our students (a test is given at entrance, also) we find every student in our school can read; some kindergarteners are able to read and compute numerical problems on a second grade level. We evaluate our results on the amount of growth a child has made during the school year. Many of our students are several grades above the level of students of the same chronological age group in other schools. We use tests we construct ourselves and many of the so-called standardized tests (even though they are culturally biased). Our future projections include a 15-year longitudinal evaluation; many of the students who began their schooling at Nairobi will be out in the field by that time and we can get an accurate evaluation of our educational program.

Costs \$65,000 Per Year

It costs approximately \$65,000 per year to operate the elementary and secondary schools. We levy a tuition (brings in approximately one-eighth of our operating budget). We are in a constant fund-raising furor (seminars, conferences, bazaars, rummage sales); members of the executive committee give lectures and act as educational consultants to/for various programs--all honoraria derived from these sources goes directly to the school. We exist, mainly, through small donations from friends and sup-

porters; some of these donors have supported the schools since inception. We receive no federal or state funds. Our elementary school has been the beneficiary of one grant from a local foundation. The majority of the funds goes for staff salaries (approximately 88 per cent); the rest goes for space costs, utilities, and expendable supplies.

Lack of funding, while not affecting the educational program, sometimes makes things rather inconvenient; for example, we have no laboratories for science and our students must travel quite a distance to use those of a host school; our library is very, very small, located in a converted garage; we have no facilities for physical education. Lack of funding and not being self-sustaining means that a few people, in addition to regular assignments and duties, write all the proposals, speak to various groups for a fee, lecture, and act as consultants; consequently, some people are very, very tired all the time.

We are a very real institution, not just a paper one. Regardless of lack of funds and an unrelenting uphill struggle, we are what we say we are.

AMEN!

For further information:

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JUNIOR COLLEGES

Nairobi College

NAIROBI COLLEGE

--Mary Hoover, Chairman
Communications Dept.*

Nairobi College, located in East Palo Alto, California, is a junior college. Its students are basically poor and Black, and there are approximately 250 students presently enrolled.

"There are several interesting things about our student body. The first one is that at least one-third of our students are over 30 years of age. The oldest student is 65 years of age. . . . We have attracted students from all over the country and the world--Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Jamaica, Trinidad, New York, New Jersey, New York, Mississippi, . . . Texas [and of course California]."

The school was set up as an alternative to the traditional junior college, normally located at the top of some hill, catering to the middle-class white student. The school started when a group of students who had been "purged" from the College of San Mateo after a "riot" came to Bob Hoover and Jean Wirth (former directors of the Readiness Program at the College of San Mateo, also victims of the purge) and asked them to help them start a college of their own. The main problem the college faced in getting started was financial. That is one thing that has not changed for the college, though it just started its fourth year in operation this September. Currently, the school has been granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation by the Western Association.

Need At Least One Technical Skill

Nairobi College feels students should have the basic skills needed to function in this society, along with at least one technical skill, when they leave the school. They should have also acquired some leadership ability and attempted to change their values from materialistic to

*With excerpts also from "Nairobi College," by Robert Hoover, founder of the college (May, 1972), added by the editor and indicated by quotes in the text.

humanistic. They should be able to follow most of the Nairobi Code and Philosophy (See Appendix E).

The college has a faculty consisting of 10 full-time people, 10 half-time people, and 10 volunteer and quarter-time people. Our faculty and staff members are from many parts of the Black world, Africa, the Carribean and the United States.

In selecting instructors, we look for personnel who have knowledge of their subject matter and indicate a willingness to follow the Nairobi Code and Philosophy. Teachers do not have to have credentials, although 10 per cent do. Prospective teachers are interviewed and selected by a selection committee, made up of the department chairperson, another teacher in the department, and a student in the department. Before the start of classes, all faculty attend a three-day general orientation. Department chairpeople also orient new staff in their departments to methods that have been used successfully.

There is also an administrative staff of several people. "The Structure of Nairobi College consists of a Board of Directors which has three community members, three student members and three faculty-staff members. The president of the college is directly responsible to the Board of Directors; he is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the college. According to our organizational chart, the college has three directorships which are: director of the central office, director of academic affairs, and director of student affairs. In actuality, the president plays the dual role of being president and director of the central office. . . ."

Student-Faculty Committees

"There are several college committees which are comprised of students and a faculty representative; these committees are all responsible to the Student Council, the main function of which is to see that the students' needs are met at the college. These committees are: Financial Aid, Staff Selection, Student Evaluation, and Emergency Loan Committees. The title of each committee should explain its function. There is one committee that has a different make-up from all the other committees. It is the Discipline Committee. This committee is composed of the president of the college, the director of academic affairs, two staff members, two students, and two members of the Board of Directors. This committee handles the disciplinary problems which are referred to it by the president, director of academic affairs, and the Student Council."

The college also employs several students in work-study posi-

tions as either tutors in the academic subjects or as assistants in the staff offices of the school.

Nairobi's curriculum falls under five departments: communications (English, foreign languages), math-science, social science, fine arts and business.

In teaching, most teachers try to avoid the lecture method as much as possible. They attempt to use group techniques such as dividing the class into committees. Our curriculum content and methodology are skills and attitudes oriented in keeping with the philosophy. Although students generally have quite a lot of choice, all must take political awareness orientation class and the appropriate English and math classes. For example, if a student has a reading problem, he is required to take a reading course.

Uses Community Facilities

Nairobi College is a "community college." The community is its campus. Other than the main office building and one other building, the college uses the facilities of other community institutions for its classroom facilities. Community members are on the college's Board of Directors, and the relationship between the college and the public educational institutions is good, particularly at the elementary level. Our tutors work in the elementary school, and we often use their facilities. Relations are not very good with the public high school, as it is governed by a board with no representation from the community on it, and thus does not represent the community. When, however, we say Nairobi is a community college, we do not refer to only the local community; "we mean the entire Pan-African community. Our community service program serves not only East Palo Alto but brothers who are in prisons over the state of California, brothers and sisters from the Continent and the Caribbean."

The community service program currently operates the following projects in the college:

1. Prison Program

The prison program has been in operation for the past 25 months. Currently, 15 brothers have been paroled to the college. We have not had one brother return to prison since his arrival at Nairobi College.

2. Research Institute

This institute is currently involved in developing a new model

for financing education for the state of California. This could have a profound effect on the education of all Black children in this state.

3. Work-Study Program

This program allows 70 of our students to work in various community agencies, such as the local schools, juvenile probation offices, library, and the neighborhood health center, at little cost to the employer.

4. African Student Program

We have approximately eight students from the Continent and three students from the Caribbean. Five members of our faculty are from the Continent. We consider this program to be a part of our contribution to the Pan-African movement in that we provide access to educational opportunities for brothers and sisters from the Continent and the Caribbean. These same brothers and sisters will return to their countries and utilize these skills. Within the next year, we plan to expand this to an exchange program whereby we will be sending some of our students and staff to Africa. We are in the process of working out the details of this arrangement.

5. Cultural Program for Local Community

Our musical groups have put on several concerts during the past year for the benefit of the community. We have also brought speakers to the community and have shown films on Africa.

6. Community Education

We have had a series of lectures on South Africa; we have also sponsored a Pan-African conference and a statewide conference for Black people in the state of California. The college is also in the process of developing a Youth Program and Drug Program for the local community.

Fifteen to 20 of our students have transferred to four-year colleges; their cumulative grade point average at these schools is 3.1. Many community people have improved their basic skills in reading and math. We have measured these achievements in two ways. First, the director keeps up with our students who transfer and their records. Second, standardized reading tests reveal that students in reading classes go up 20 percentile points or two grades each quarter.

Our current operating budget is approximately \$320,000. Funds for operating the college are raised through the federal government (OEO) and private foundations (the Olerton Farms Trust Fund). "We have received funding from the Office of Education for our Talent Search Program, Student Special Services, and the Student Financial Aid Program. The faculty members are paid from the tuition that the students pay to attend Nairobi College." Funding is always a concern and it affects the school's operations, as most of the staff have families and need a steady source of income.

For further information:

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Editor's Note: For a discussion of four-year Black institutions, see Foreword, p. ix.

APPENDIX D

(The concept of NGUZO SABA, also known as the Seven Black Principles, constitutes the philosophical basis for several of the schools included in this book, e. g., Highland Park Free School, Centers for New Horizons, Nairobi College. The following is the statement of Highland Park Free School's application of NGUZO SABA.)

NGUZO SABA

We are beautiful people. We will grow, learn and become strong. As a member of the Highland Park Free School family, I will do my best to live by the Nguzo Saba.

UMOJA = Unity--to strive for and maintain unity in the family, school and community.

KUJICHAGULIA = Self-determination--to define ourselves, name ourselves and speak for ourselves instead of being defined and spoken for by others.

UJIMA = Collective work and responsibility--to build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers and sisters' problems our problems.

UJAMAA = Cooperative economics--to build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit together from them.

NIA = Purpose--to dedicate ourselves to doing our best and to discipline ourselves for the good of our people.

KUUMBA = Creativity--to use all of our talents to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.

IMANI = Faith--to believe with all our hearts in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our friends and ourselves.

APPENDIX E

(The following is a statement of the Nairobi College philosophy and application of the Seven Black Principles.)

NAIROBI CODE - NGUZO SABA

CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOR EXPECTED OF NAIROBI PEOPLE

UNITY - (UMOJA)

1. That they respect each other and create unity and harmony by listening to each other and preventing verbal and physical abuse to other members of the family.
2. That they are honest with themselves and others.
3. That they are courteous and polite at all times with all Black people.
4. That they be able to accept constructive criticism without ill feelings.
5. That they trust each other.
6. That they do not use excessive profanity when dealing with the community.
7. That they do not run games on each other (Nairobi College is designed to help you help yourself and other Black people, not to give you a crutch.)
8. That they make a concerted effort to be punctual.
9. That they not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while dealing with any college-related function.
10. That they do not use the name NAIROBI COLLEGE for any illegal purposes or gains.

COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY - (UJIMA)

11. That they exercise discipline by attending school functions, classes and meetings, and by doing all required work--mental and physical.

COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS - (UJAMAA); CREATIVITY - (KUUMBA)

12. That they contribute something to the college while there. (Nairobi was built on the volunteer efforts of many.) This contribution should be financial, spiritual, and creative.

FAITH - (IMANI)

13. That they show loyalty and faith to the college and community.

NAIROBI COLLEGE PHILOSOPHY

PREAMBLE:

We are an African people, by definition and by choice. We reaffirm our traditional African heritage, the essence of an ethos which has sustained us through an alien experience, and declare it to be the foundation upon which the contemporary African emerges. We must strive for commitment to the spiritual, political, and economic liberation of African people and the acceptance of the Seven Axioms of Blackness as the fundamental set of principles which guide our lives and give direction to our actions. We must be motivated to action by a belief in ourselves, and undying love for our people. And we must be continually involved in the process of acquiring the knowledge and discipline necessary to the struggle of building an African Nation.

The following statement of purpose (Nia) and declaration of self-determination (Kujichagulia) constitutes the Nairobi Philosophy:

1. Recruit and train leaders to deal with problems scientifically and guide and develop Black communities politically, economically and socially.
2. Serve the community by bringing human, economic and cultural resources to it.
3. Teach academic and survival skills.
4. Help people to develop where and how they can best use their skills.
5. Have faith in and deal with all Black people, and not a select few.
6. Train people how to relate to the total Black struggle.
7. Relate the Black struggle to other Third-World struggles.
8. Achieve the seven principles of the Nguzo Saba. (See Nairobi Code.)
9. Develop a value system that is humanistic rather than materialistic.
10. Develop an extended family oriented concept--that we help others while we help ourselves.