

B. A. Moulton

**NAIROBI
COLLEGE
20TH YEAR
REUNION**



An Interview With Robert Hoover, Founder of Nairobi College



How did Nairobi College get started?

Students of San Mateo Community College (SMCC) actually started Nairobi College. During the aftermath of the Black student uprising at SMCC of December 13, 1968, the Black students decided to leave the school and they began discussing how to start their own college. I actually told them they were crazy, but I eventually became convinced they were right. We convinced Jean Weaver to let us use approximately \$50,000.00 originally earmarked for the college readiness program and Nairobi College was born, out of the racism at SMCC.

Who were the first principles i.e., administrators and board members?

Myself and Jean Wirth were the first administrators, since we also had administrated the College readiness program. The board included Helen McCullough, Hank Organ and others. Gertrude Wilkes was in on the discussions since I was working at her day school prior to working at the college.

What was the goal of Nairobi College? Was it to become a community college?

No. Our goal was actually to become a four year institution. We only used the two year label to as an interim step because we did not have the resources for a four year institution at the outset.

What were the primary problems you initially faced?

The initial ones were staff and money. The staffing problem seemed the most critical. I wondered how we were going to attract quality, conscious people without the normal incentives used at regular schools.

How did you solve these initial problems?

The staff were attracted to the effort by the prevailing concepts of Black self-determination and involvement in the building of a community. The civil rights movement and the Black revolution of the 1960's produced many people who were looking for something tangible to be involved in. Nairobi College provided that involvement. People actually come from all over the world to make a contribution. Volunteers contributed heavily to the instructional program and to administration in general.

It was much easier to find initial funding. We applied to the U.S. Department of Education for financial aid. We had helped to draft educational legislation and this resulted in immediate funding of our application for approximately one half- million dollars. We received \$120,000.00 per year from San Mateo College for several years and another \$300,000.00 per year for five years from the Carnegie Foundation. The Urban Coalition contributed \$25,000.00. Our first five years were easily funded.

What do you feel was Nairobi College's greatest accompaniment?

We proved we could create a institution and make it work, and we were able to gain acceptance of our graduates at established schools, where they excelled. We produced students who became doctors, architects and Engineers and many of our graduates are even

today in positions where they are able to have a positive impact on Black development and progress.

What does the reunion mean to you?

It is a chance to see old friends and learn what has happened to former associates. I am particularly interested in hearing from former students regarding their analysis of the Nairobi College experience; the successes, errors, their accomplishments and the impact of the College on their lives. I am sure it will be an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Nairobi Messengers

The Nairobi Messengers (NM) served as the spiritual arm of Nairobi College (NC). The NM purpose was the same as Nairobi College, but its medium was music, dance and drama instead of the class room.

Several vocalists and musicians received their start in the NM. The purpose was to bring a message of Pan Africanism through African artistic forms, in particular through music. They were the first large vocal group to do this in the Bay area, such as the Wajumbe Cultural Ensemble had done earlier through the medium of dance. During its' brief existence the NM made a lasting impression on Bay area Black artists. We cannot but wonder what former Nairobi Messengers did artistically after leaving Nairobi College. Although were unable to contact all the past members of the Messengers, here are the paths that a few have followed since Nairobi College.

Vulindlela and Nozipo Wobogo

Co-Director/Musician/Arranger...percussionist

Since leaving Nairobi College, the Wobogo Family has traveled and recorded in an African context. Bro. Vulindlela and Sister Nozipo performed for Wajumbe Cultural Ensemble as musical director/pianist and vocalist/bassist respectively at the Festival of African Culture (FESTAC) held in Nigeria in 1977. They recorded a High-Life album featuring the compositions of Suleiman Rogee titled "African Lady" in a similar capacity. The Wobogo Ensemble also appeared on four Frontliners albums, during which Nozipo served as bassist and background vocalist and Vulindlela as pianist and arranger for four Kalamu Chache' compositions. On the fourth album, Sister Nozipo performed a jazz original by Vulindlela as the featured vocalist backed by his trio. Vulindlela has performed as a jazz pianist with John Handy, and Pharoah Sanders and currently performs throughout the Bay area individually and with his jazz ensemble.

Jdlinkomo

Vibist/Percussionist

Jdlinkomo currently resides in the Los Angeles area where he is very much in demand as a musician/arranger/composer. He has performed as vibist for several renown stars i.e., Chaka Khan, Lou Rawls and many others. He has also become proficient as a pianist in which he originally played mainly to compose. He toured for years with the "Sons and Daughters of Lite" after leaving Nairobi College. He continues to expand his musical horizons as his professional career advances.

Mary Bains-Fort (Nakpangi Wambui)

Vocalist/Pianist

Wambui has expanded her musical horizons to include pianist duties for several Bay area churches, several compositions, former vocalist for the Peninsula Mass Choir, former

vocalist for Potential, and appearances as both musician, lead and background vocalist throughout the Bay area. She has composed a wide range of music from childrens' songs and gospel selections to contemporary modern arrangements. She currently serves as the Minister of Music for the New Fellowship District, a conglomeration of churches, serving the Peninsula and the Bay area. Her plans are to record an album of original compositions in the near future.

Sherry Mitchell-James
Vocalist/Flutist

Sherry currently resides in a suburb of Sacramento where she takes time from her busy schedule as a pediatrician to play her flute and sing. She has performed as a vocalist with a singing group in medical school.

Lakiba Pittman (Jennifer)
Vocalist/Composer

Lakiba, since leaving Nairobi College, has recorded and toured with the Sons and Daughter of Lite and has written and performed several original compositions. After her tour with the Sons and Daughters of Lite, Lakiba danced for several years with Fua Dia Congo under the direction of Malonga Casque Lourdes. Lakiba performed as lead vocalist and served as group manager for Precision for several years. She sang briefly with Wajumbe Cultural Ensemble and is currently performing as lead vocalist with Beat Freaks, an international group which performs "World Beat" music. She recently has become interested in Jazz and has attended several workshops and camps under the auspices of several nationally known Bay area based musicians. She plans to continue to expand her musical horizons in the future.

Kalamu Chache'
Poetess/Vocalist

Since Nairobi College days Sister Chache' has continued to produce and perform musical and poetic works with a positive African message. Chache' has founded the creative arts enterprise, Kalamu Productions, to publish her poetic and musical works as well as anthologies, cards, booklets and the like. She toured and recorded with the Sons and Daughters of Lite and has appeared three times as vocalist, composer and arranger on the Frontliners album series which is distributed nationally by the Black United Front. Chache' continues to produce and share her artistic works with the world and to contribute locally to the development of African (Black) independent institutions as an artist and administrator, especially for the youth.

Bobbie Croft Taylor (Malenga)
Vocalist

Shortly after leaving Nairobi College Sister Malenga launched her career as a professional vocalist. She toured with the Church Sisters, Mixed Blood, The Quank Movement and others. She eventually earned the opportunity to perform as an opening act for the Whispers and she has performed in session with such renowned stars as Stevie Wonder, Bill Withers. At one time she was billed (justifiably) as the top pop vocalist in the Bay Area. After several years as a professional vocalist, Malenga left the commercial stage and began singing with the Mount Zion Baptist Church, but she still does occasional studio work for Bay area musicians.

Tommie Moore (Nyati)
Vocal/Percussionist

Since his departure from Nairobi College, Nyati has recorded an album with his group "The Boys On The Block" which has received good reviews. The album is currently aired on Bay

area radio stations. Nyati is currently studying piano and music theory and has plans for more recordings in the future and for more performances throughout the Bay area.

Sam Pittman (Isuku)
Vocalist

Sam, since leaving the Messengers, has expanded his original role as bass vocalist to include that of lead vocalist as well. He formed the group "High Life" with three other Nairobi Messengers; Gene Scott (kujichagulia), Chuckie Beckum (Jasiri), and Charles Boulding (Musiki). The group performed throughout the west coast of the United States for several years before disbanding for each "to find his own way".

Seitu
Vocalist/Guitarist

Seitu has composed several original compositions and has produced tapes in which he plays all the instrumental parts. He currently resides in Boston where he is assistant Manager of La Salle music store. Seitu continues to play his guitar throughout his area of residence.

Wayne Wallace
Guitarist

Wayne performed for years with the R/B group Graham Central Station as lead guitarist. During that time he travelled extensively throughout the world. Wayne has performed on a number of recordings, has written many compositions and continues to perform studio work throughout the nation in both the soul and gospel styles.

Faye McNair-Knox
Vocalist/Pianist

After leaving Nairobi College Faye became part of the group "Voices of Nairobi". This group included Joe McNair, Harriet McNair, Assatta Lee and Hasani Perkins, all former messengers. The group performed to thrilled audiences throughout the Bay Area. Sister Faye served as vocalist, arranger and pianist. Later, she joined Fua Dia Congo as a dancer and performed for several years with the currently internationally known group. She also formed her own group "The Knox Family" which featured the vocal stylings of her three daughters and her arrangements. When her busy schedule as a Stanford University professor permits, she serves as pianist for a local church.

Nairobi College Memorials

James Winder
Sandra Boulding (Malkia)
Delores Randal
Juju Nwaloro
Alfred Deal
Elaine King

Nairobi College Reunion and Conference

Agenda

Saturday, July 30, 1988 8:30 - 4:30
East Palo Alto Council Chambers
2415 University Avenue, E. Palo Alto, CA

AGBO (Meeting)

- 8:30 - 8:55 Registration/Coffee, Tea, Juice
8:55 - 9:00 Introduction/Recognition of Elected Officials & Educators
9:00 - 9:25 Keynote Speech - "History And Development Of Nairobi College"
Acknowledgements - Robert Hoover, First President, Founder
9:25 - 10:35 Panel Discussion - "What Nairobi Accomplished"
Panelists: Don Smothers, Former President
Larry Thompson, Founder
Mavis Knox, Former Director of Academic Affairs
Ron Lewis, Former Director of Student Affairs
Faye McNair-Knox, Former Instructor
Mary Hoover, Former Chairperson of Communications
Hank Organ, Former Board Member
10:35 - 11:45 Panel Discussion - "What We Learned At Nairobi College And What Are We
Doing Presently" Testifying Session!
Panelists: Bubba Nelson, Engineer, Founder
Larry Thompson, Founder
Mary Bains-Fort, Entrepreneur, Businesswoman
Denise Nicholson, D.D.S.
Schery Mitchell-James, M.D.
and others
11:45 - 12:45 Lunch, Audio-Visual Presentations
 - Vulindlela I. Wobogo, "A Pictorial View of Nairobi College"
 - Darryl Prevost, U.S. Pan African Festival of Arts and Cultural Support Consortium, Special Presentation
 - Jawanza Osayimwese, Stanford African Student Association, Short Film of Nairobi College

- 12:45- 1:10 Solidarity Message - ANC School In Tanzania, Bro. Neo Mnumzana, UN Representative African National Congress
1:10 - 2:50 Panel Discussion - "Status of Black Education, Local-National Levels"
Moderator: Omowale Satterwhite, Director, Community Development Inst.
Panelists: St Clair Drake, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University
Oba T'Shaka, Chairman, National Black United Front
Nobantu Ankoanda, Shule Nyansa Sua
Jimmy Garrett, Former President of Center For Black Education
Aguibau Yansane, Black Studies, San Francisco State
Shirley Lewis, Director, The Black College Fund
2:50- 3:45 Nairobi Messengers
 - History - Vulindlela I. Wobogo, Former Director/Musician
(1 minute of silence in memory of past members of the Nairobi College)
 - Musical Presentation -The Original Nairobi Messengers

3:45 - 4:30 Open Forum - "Do We Need Another Nairobi Community Based Institution Of
Higher Education. How To Avoid Past Errors. Funding Sources"
Afternoon Break
6:30 pm Get down at Quincys Restaurant, 303 Bryant St., Mountain View
MC's - Tommie Moore and Kalamu Chache
6:30 - 8:30 Buffet dinner served.
Wobogo Jazz Ensemble! Music to dine by.
8:45 - 9:45 Nairobi Messengers Performance
9:55- 1:30 Evening Entertainment! Socialization! Dancing!

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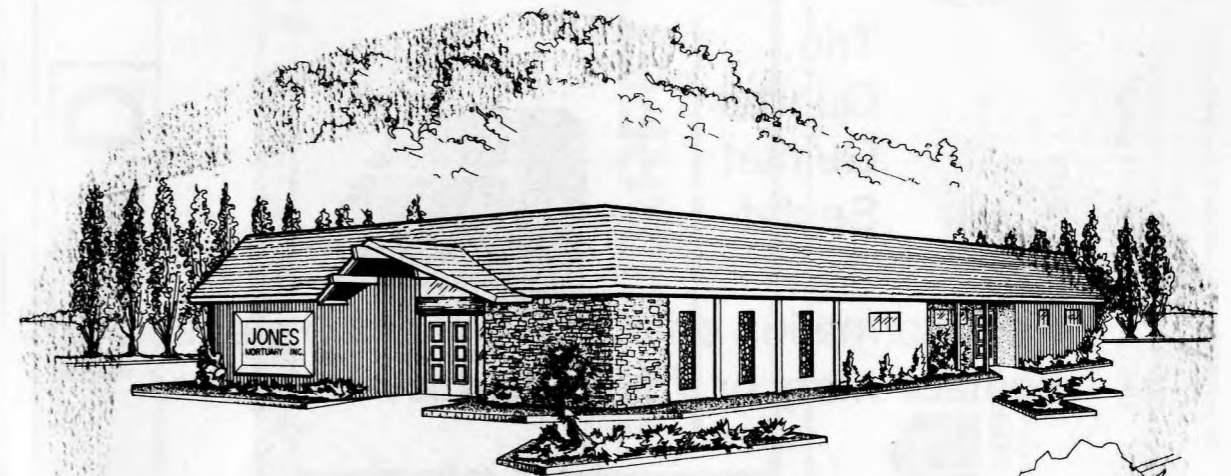
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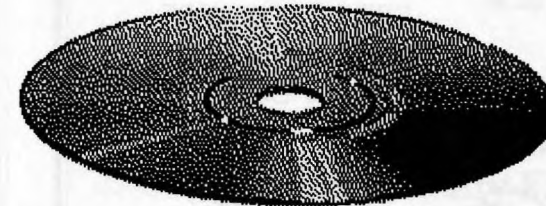
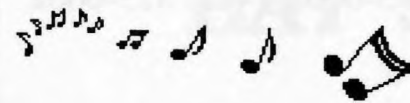
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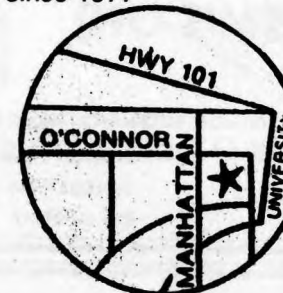
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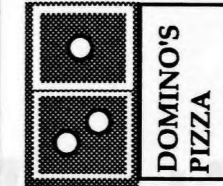
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