

January 14, 1960

A STATEMENT ON THE PROGRAM AND PLANS OF THE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS FOUNDATION, INC.,
477 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK 22, N. Y.

BACKGROUND OF THE FOUNDATION:

Since Tom Mboya's return to Kenya, from his first trip to America in 1956, and until September 1958, an American friend of his helped a number of Kenya students to come to the United States by supplying them with free airline tickets. The volume of requests grew and so in Sept. 1958 it was decided to form the African-American Students Foundation, Inc., in New York, to raise funds from the American public. From Sept. 1958 to August 1959 the Foundation was still wholly supported by the one individual.

Following Tom Mboya's second trip to America, in the spring of 1959, he was able personally to arrange for over fifty scholarships at the various American colleges and universities at which he spoke. During the summer of 1959 it appeared that there would be sufficient students with scholarships to justify chartering a plane from Nairobi to New York. Even though a major expense was involved for the plane, some \$24,000., the unit cost per passenger was reduced by about fifty per cent (50%), from the regular commercial airline fare.

Therefore in the summer of 1959 it became apparent that substantial funds would have to be raised publicly in order for the first plane load of students --- 81 students --- to be brought here in September of last year. At this point Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier and Jackie Robinson -- all of whom had separately met with Tom Mboya on various occasions during his American tour --- willingly agreed to act as sponsors. Letters over their signatures went out to about 250,000 persons. To date almost 10,000 individual contributions have been received from all over the United States, ranging in amounts from a few cents to a single contribution of \$4,500. In addition Jackie Robinson has personally been responsible for raising \$4,000. which has been distributed in the form of Jackie Robinson Scholarships to six of the students at Michigan State University, Philander Smith College, Howard University, University of Hawaii, Simpson College and Manhattan College.

On September 7, 1959 PROJECT AIRLIFT-AFRICA 1959 became a reality when our chartered plane carrying 81 students departed from Nairobi, landing at Idlewild Airport, New York on September 9. This was the first student airlift of its kind from any part of Africa. Additionally three more students arrived later by regular commercial carrier. This group of students -- all from Kenya, except one each from Uganda and Tanganyika -- consists of 70 men and 14 women, representing some 16 different tribes including Kikuyu, Nandi, Luhya, Maragoli, Mganda, Kibabu, Kamba, Taita, Luo, Kissi, Masai, Meru, Chonyi, Bunyore, Moslem and Goan. (Names and colleges of the students are available on the attached list).

PROGRAM OF THE FOUNDATION:

The basic purpose of the Foundation is to assist qualified African students who wish to pursue a course of higher education in the United States, and who are prepared to make a maximum effort to help themselves. Self-help on the part of the students, and the cooperation and initiative of the African people are the keynotes of our program. It is because the initiative came from Tom Mboya and his colleagues, Gikonyo Kiano and Mariuke Njiiri that the program started in Kenya.

HOW A STUDENT COMES TO THE U.S.A. UNDER THIS PROGRAM:

In order for a student to come to the United States under this program, a number of steps must be taken:

First, the student on his own initiative must apply for and obtain admission to an accredited American institution. Many students do this directly, others after first consulting with and being referred by Messrs. Mboya, Kiano and Njiiri, as well as the Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S.I.S. in Nairobi. Students are referred to Lovejoy's College Guide and The New American Guide to Colleges (both available from the U.S.I.S. in Nairobi as well as the Foundation's African associates) which list complete information about virtually every college in the United States, as well as detailed instructions on the mechanics of applying for a scholarship and admission, and other important guidance information. Students are also referred to African Students in the United States, A Handbook of Information and Orientation, published by the Phelps-Stokes Fund - 1957. Before a passport is issued the Kenya Education Department must also approve of the college selected. In every instance the American institution itself makes the final decision as to what student or students are accepted by them.

Second, arrangements must be made for the student's major expenses in America --- tuition, room and board. Requests are made directly to the institutions for scholarships covering these needs, and the bulk of them are met in that way. Scholarships range from a minimum of tuition only, to full scholarships with all expenses paid. In addition many American individuals have supplied partial or full scholarship help, such as the Jackie Robinson Scholarships noted above. Others have assisted by providing free housing and boarding for students. For example, four of the students in attendance at the University of Chicago and at Roosevelt University have tuition scholarships only from those institutions, but are being given free room and board by a Chicago family. Also five Chicagoans are contributing \$500. yearly each, to cover other expenses of these particular students. It can be readily seen that a major financial contribution is being made to this program by the more than 60 American colleges and universities. Also organizations, such as the African-American Institute, which awarded over \$12,000. in grants to Kenya students in 1959, are indispensable to the program. While the Foundation itself at this point cannot grant full scholarships, some funds are used to provide supplementary scholarship assistance.

Third, each student is required to raise a minimum of \$280. in cash. This is a requirement of the American immigration authorities. Most of the students must raise additional sums beyond this, not only to supplement the scholarships they may have received, but also to meet certain

initial and incidental expenses such as for cold weather clothing, textbooks, etc. In several instances students unable to obtain scholarship aid raised the entire sum required, in Kenya. Students raise this money in several ways: (1) by working and saving. (Several individual students had saved for five or more years to reach the required amount); (2) students raise funds from their families, clans, tribal and social groups; (3) a student will raise funds by literally contacting hundreds of small shopkeepers and other individuals until his goal is met - collecting a shilling here and a pound note there. Some of the Asian shopkeepers and traders have been very cooperative in this regard; (4) in some instances an African's most precious property -- land or cattle (according to the tribe involved) is sold to raise the needed funds; and finally a Kenya Students Fund has recently been organized in an effort to raise funds for self-help on a nationwide basis from the African population at large.

Fourth, after having successfully accomplished the first three steps there remains the question of transportation from Nairobi to New York, and from New York to college campus. The Foundation completely supplies this service, and by chartering aircraft is able to substantially reduce transportation costs. Prior to the 1959 Airlift, transportation to America was the largest single obstacle in the path of students. Students who have helped themselves the most are the first to be considered for places on the plane. Students are selected by the African leaders.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF THE STUDENTS IN AMERICA:

These generally fall into two main categories: First, the human problem of adjustment to new surroundings and cultural milieu. Dr. Kiano (Ph.D., University of California) and Kariuki Njiri (M.A., New School for Social Research) have each lived in this country for long periods. Tom Mboya, of course, has also had wide contacts in the United States. Each of them has spent considerable time realistically discussing with the students, separately and in groups, what they may expect in America. Upon arrival in New York the Foundation organized a 2-3 days orientation and sightseeing program which it is hoped further assisted the students in adjustment. The primary source of guidance quite naturally is from the educational institutions themselves. The Foundation also keeps in contact with the various students, but more needs to be done in this respect. It would be highly desirable if the Kenya Government would appoint a Kenya Students Advisor, resident in this country, to work with the students. All of the British West African colonies such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria and others presently have such full time staffs. Finally, the Foundation has recently provided the Kenya students organization in this country with the means to publish their own news letter, so they may stay in touch with one another, and keep in touch with affairs at home. Up till now this has been a major need of students in this country.

Second, financial needs of students. In the course of their stay in America, additional funds will be required by certain students from time to time. The Foundation does meet emergency needs that arise, generally involving small amounts of money -- less than \$50. or \$100. For more basic needs of tuition, room and board some other scholarships and grants are available, from other sources, but certainly not enough to satisfy the needs of all African students. Some assistance can be obtained from local religious and other groups where the colleges are

located. The major source of income for students is by working. Many are able to find jobs on campuses. And virtually all must work during the summer vacation period to help themselves through college. A major responsibility of the Foundation is to help students locate summer work. Certain employers and local trade unions have been most helpful in this matter in past years. With the larger number of students now here, more organized efforts must be initiated in this field. Tom Mboya, who is the Chairman of the I.C.F.T.U. African Regional Organization, is in touch with his colleagues in the American trade union movement on the question of summer jobs and it is hoped that an adequate program can be worked out.

PLANS FOR PROJECT AIRLIFT-AFRICA 1960:

News of the 1959 Airlift has spread across Africa. It was widely broadcast and published throughout the African continent by the various U.S.I.S. offices and Voice of Africa. Some 5,000 Africans waited up to eight hours at the airport in Nairobi to see the students off. This widespread interest stems not only from the magnitude of the Project, but also because this is the first major partnership of Africans and Americans in an educational program of this character.

Hundreds of letters have reached us and our associates from African students not only in Kenya, but also in Nyasaland, Tanganyika, Uganda, and the Rhodesias seeking our advice and help to start on an American education September, 1960. Based on the response received for the 1959 program, and the estimated needs for 1960, we tentatively plan to charter three aircraft to bring 243 students here this year.

Our plans for 1960 are also dependent on the response from American educational institutions. Within the next 30 days, a nationally known educator will, on behalf of the Foundation, write a personal letter to the President of approximately 1,000 selected institutions inviting that school to participate in this program. While every effort will be made to see that students are brought in to this program from other countries in East and Central Africa, but much depends on the conditions in those areas. Also on the response, initiative and self-help shown by the African leaders and students involved. For example, last year the 81 Kenya students had raised in Kenya over \$50,000. Much more will now be required for 1960.

The final requirement for the success of the 1960 program is increased support from the American public, and organizations with established interest in this field. Without the support of such distinguished Americans as Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier and Jackie Robinson who have generously assisted us, the historic 1959 Airlift could not have succeeded. Much credit belongs to them. We are heartened by their pledge of continued support.

In a letter from Tom Mboya dated August 28, 1959, he says: "My efforts to help African students to study overseas -- United States, etc. -- is based on my conviction that our people need higher education, and that as a leader it is my task and responsibility to help. I have been very encouraged by the response, ambition and determination of most of our youths. I have also been particularly encouraged by the African people who have so willingly raised funds to help these youths in their search for knowledge. Dr. Kiano, Mr. Kariuki Njiiri and myself inter-

viewed more than one hundred and forty students last Monday and it was particularly encouraging if not exciting to see several students heavily laden with over ten thousand shillings collected by their clansmen. In some cases, some boys had worked through correspondence colleges up to Higher School Certificate to win admission to a college. Self-help is something that brings out the best in any person and I take pride in whatever contribution I can make to assist such boys or girls. These are the men and women who will help build our nation."