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-- Publishers Weekly, 7/13/2009

Airlift to America: How Barack Obama Sr., John F. Kennedy, Tom Mboya, and 800 East African Students Changed Their World and Ours Tom Shachtman. St. Martin's, \$24.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-312-57075-0

One of the true global cultural exchange programs that paid huge dividends, the African American Students Foundation (AASF), is the timely topic of Shachtman's (*Rumspringa*) new book. The brainchild of Kenyan politician Tom Mboya and American businessman William Scheinman, the AASF's goal was to bring top African students to America between 1959 and 1963 in order to establish a group of accomplished young Africans to staff government positions and the educational system in their native countries upon the fall of colonialism. Called the "airlift generation," prized students from Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Rhodesia, among them President Obama's father, Barack Sr., and Wangari Maathai, the winner of the 2004 Nobel Prize, were chosen to study in American colleges and universities. Shachtman relates the political controversies surrounding the program and U.S. government involvement, as African nations gained independence and became proxies in the cold war. A memorable and poignant recounting of a significant endeavor that is still scoring successes around the world, this book is not to be missed by African and American history buffs. 8 pages of b&w photos. (Sept.)