FROM BLACK POWER TO THE NEW MILINIUM: THE EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN CENTERED EDUCATION IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN 1970-2000

By

Kefentse K. Chike

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

African American and African Studies

2011

ABSTRACT

FROM BLACK POWER TO THE NEW MILLENNIUM:
THE EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN CENTERED EDUCATION IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN
FROM 1970- 2000

By

Kefentse K. Chike

This research examines the birth and evolution of the Independent Black School Movement which evolved into the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement. The Independent Black School Movement emerged from the Community Control of Schools Movement during the Black Power era in the late 1960's. The architects of this movement withdrew from the Community of Control of Schools Movement and established several private schools that were independently own and operated by African Americans. These schools were established and operated within the philosophical and ideological context of Black Power and Black Nationalism. The first Independent Black Schools emerged on the East coast in New York, Philadelphia, New Jersey and Washington, D.C. Within a short period of time Independent Black schools were established within cities throughout the United States. The independent Black School Movement came to be known as the African Centered Education Movement.

The objective of this work is to examine and document the inception and evolution of the Independent Black School Movement/Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement in Detroit, Michigan from 1970 until 2000. Moreover, this study seeks to determine the degree that the founding goals of nation-building and the related ideologies of Black Nationalism and Black Power were sustained as the movement evolved.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the creator and ancestors who enabled me to complete this work. Medase, Medase, Medase Pa! (Thank you very much) and to my great-grand parents, grand-parents, mother and son; Lillie Mae Redmond, James Redmond, Annie Reid and Charles Homer Reid, Ruthenette Redmond and Charles J. Redmond, Brenda Ann Redmond-Gooden, and my son Kofi Nyamekye Early Chike.

We are linked in life and Death.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The effort, sacrifices, blood, sweat and tears reflected in this work exceed my own. It is only though the collective efforts of my dissertation committee, my graduate school professors, colleagues, and my community and family that this work could manifest as reality. I say Asante Sana (Thank you very much) to Dr. Pero Dagbovie, Dr. Gloria Smith, Dr. Geneva Smitherman, and Dr. Richard Thomas who served as my dissertation committee members. Thank very much for your leadership and guidance through the dissertation process.

I thank Dr. Pero G. Dagbovie whose work ethic and commitment to excellence has been a source of inspiration and has provided me with a standard to work towards. Thank you for the enduring friendship and brotherhood which never interfered with this journey, but served as an additional source of support particularly during those challenging times that accompany all of us along this journey. I thank Dr. Gloria Smith for her guidance and inspiration as an elder scholar, advocate and surrogate mother throughout this process. I thank Dr. Geneva Smitherman for her years of service and contributions to African American education within academia and the broader community. Thank you for challenging me to think deeper and to be accurate. Finally, I thank Dr. Richard Thomas for you commitment, activism, skill and expertise as a historian. I am forever indebted to you for insisting that I take your class on African Americans in Detroit before agreeing to be a member of my committee. Although I took the class begrudgingly, it was the best class that I have ever taken.

I am forever thankful and indebted to the broader community from which I emerge. This relationship is best expressed in the African proverb “I am because we are”. I thank the founders and members of the Pan African Orthodox Church for creating a process that enabled me to

change and become a contributing member to my community. I am thankful to the antecedents, architects, and participants in the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement.

While their names are too numerous to list here it is only through their work that this work is possible. I thank the past and present members of the Council of Independent Black Institutions and its Ndundu (leadership body) for their commitment to retain the Nation-building/Black Nationalist focus of the Independent African-centered Education Movement. I am also thankful for the many Detroit educators, activist, students, and families that demonstrated a commitment to the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement. I thank Mama Imani Humphrey and the founders of the Alexander Crummell Center for Learning for their vision, courage, and commitment which manifested in the institutions they created and the many African-centered thinkers they produced. I thank Baba Malik Yakini and the founders of the Nsoroma Institute for expanded upon the work of your predecessors and sustaining their vision. Thank you Mama Imani and Baba Malik for allowing me to be a member of the learning communities you facilitated and for the access you allowed both of which were essential to completion of this project. I am thankful to the members of the Community Task Force for Education members; Mzee Nabawi. Bonatchi Montgomery, Tahirah Akmed, Said Mulagala, and Rukia Kitwana for your work and willingness to share. I thank Mama Dahia Shabaka for your hard work, commitment and to the many members of the Detroit Public Schools system for your contributions to this work.

Finally I would like to thank my friends and family. I thank Dr. Joyce Piert for challenging me intellectually and pushing to "finish." I thank Adjowa Chike, for contributing to my growth and development and for inspiring me to complete this process. I thank Akilah

Redmond, Carol Bristol, and Dr. Lisa Bratton who each contributed to my ongoing struggle to be a better writer. I thank my family the Redmond Klan; Daddy, Mother, Ma! Auntee Lynn, Auntee Charlita, Uncle Darryl, Auntee Joan, Auntee Yaa, Roderick, Laura, David, their spouses and offspring for creating a familial environment that taught me to think critically. To Aunt Joan special thanks for the support, inspiration and the added push in the final phases. To Aunt you thank you for encouraging me the many ways that you have. Finally I say to the creator and ancestors Medase! Medase! Medase Pa!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1
Literature Review 7
Research Methods 19

CHAPTER 1 21
The Pre-Formal Period……....21
The Early Independent Education Period……...22
Community Control of Schools Movement 1966-1970…….29
New York Community Control of Schools Movement ……..……..30
Detroit Community Control of Schools Movement……32
Detroit Student Protest Movement 1966-1971 40

CHAPTER 2 53
The Independent Period 1970-1990 53
The Uhuru Sasa Shule (School) 54
The Council of Independent Black Institutions 57
Ideology/Philosophy 61
Black Curriculum and Implementation 63
Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition..... 64
Community Development..... 65
Baba Jitu Weusi 1972-1976 66
Baba Kofi Lomotey 1976-1987..... 69
Mama Naima Olugbala 1987-1990 81
Baba Mwalimu Shujaa 1990-2000 82
The Aisha Shule (School) 75
Ideology/Philosophy 80
Black Curriculum and Implementation 81
Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition..... 82
The Sankofa Society..... 84
The Akuaba Society..... 84
The Akoben Society 94
The Pyramid Performance Theatre..... 85
Peripheral Programs 86
The Nsoroma Institute 88
Ideology/Philosophy..... 93
Black Curriculum and Implementation 95
Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition..... 96

Mama and Baba's Club 97
Rites of Passage 98
Thiosane African Drum and Dance Ensemble 98
Community Education Program 98
Food Security Program 89

CHAPTER 3 101
The Independent/Public Period 1990-1995 101
The Community Task Force for Education 104
The Detroit Board of Education 109
The Sankore Teachers Study Group 110
The Black Child Placed In Crisis Symposium/Conferences 111
The African Heritage Culture Center 113
The African-centered Male Academies 115
The Mission 125
The Philosophy 127
The Curriculum 128
Parental/ Community Development 129
Framework and Definition of African-centered Education 132
African-centered Education Resolution 134
The Indaba 135

CHAPTER 4 139
The Public Period 1994-2000 139
Charter Schools 139
Aisha Shule 141
Nsoroma Institute 143
External Challenges 148
Internal Challenges 153
Ideology/Philosophy 154
Black Curriculum Development and Implementation 157
Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition 159
Student Behaviors 161

CONCLUSION 165

APPENDICES 174
Definition of Terms 175

BIBLIOGRAPHY 177

Introduction

This study examines the evolution of the Contemporary Independent African - Centered Education Movement (CIACEM) in Detroit, Michigan. The study covers the CIACEM from 1970 until 2000, and focuses on the pivotal years between 1990 and 2000. The CIACEM is the contemporary version of James Doughty's "Contemporary Independent Black School Movement."[1] In the early 1970's, Doughty asserted that the movement emerged from a series of historical conferences held by various organizations during the late 1960s and from the development of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI).[2] The institutional members of the CIACEM included those independent schools that were originally established to create and preserve educational experiences that reflected the African aspects of the social, political and cultural experiences of African Americans.[3] The term African-centered replaces the term "Black" in this study because the aforementioned schools have become identified as African-centered Schools.[4]

The African-American community in Detroit has played an important role in the overall development and evolution of the CIACEM since 1974 The CIACEM, its antecedents and their evolution in Detroit are replete with developments and trends that are reflective of the broader

---

[1] James Doughty. "A Historical Analysis of Black Education- Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement." (doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University). Doughty's work names the early African-centered education movement the Independent Black School Movement.

[2] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement,". 3.

[3] Ina Walker, "African-Centered Education: An Afrocentric Analysis of its Purpose, Principles, and Practices in an Independent Black Institution." (doctoral dissertation, Temple University).

[4] The origin of the term African Centered is currently unknown.

movement within the United States. While it is commonly held that the CIACEM emerged from the efforts of the Oceanhill-Brownsville struggle for community control that began in 1966, recent research suggests that there were a host of other important factors that contributed to the development of African-centered education in Detroit. Detroit provides an optimal case study for the CIACEM because the city has a history of Black activism and is the birthplace of numerous Black activist organizations, such as the Nation of Islam, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, the Republic of New Afrika and the Black Labor Movement. Furthermore, African-American educators in Detroit have been involved in the CIACEM during its formative years and have also contributed to key innovations within the larger movement.

This study explores the CIACEM in four distinct yet interconnected phases: the pre-formal phase, the independent phase, the independent public phase and the public phase. The *Pre-Formal Phase,* (1962-1972) covers the 10-year period that led to the formal inception of the CIACEM and examines key contributing events and individuals that serve as antecedents to the movement. This phase is characterized by the efforts of the Group on Advance Leadership (GOAL) and their advocacy for culturally-relevant text books in Detroit public schools, the local movement for community control of schools led by Albert B. Cleage and Grace Boggs, and the Detroit student protest movement that was led by Detroit public school students and lasted from 1966 through 1972.

The *Independent Phase* (1970-1990), is characterized by the emergence of the nation's first Independent African-centered school; Uhuru Sasa, and the Council of Independent Black Institutions the first organization of Independent African-centered schools. It was during this period that Detroit's African-centered schools were also founded. Both Detroit schools were established as independent schools and became members of the Council of Independent Black

Institutions. The *Independent/Public Phase* (1990-1995)**,** is characterized by the immersion of African-centered curriculum by the Detroit Public Schools (DPS); the broader adoption of African-centered curriculum and philosophy by the DPS; and the establishment of Detroit's are all male African-centered schools; Malcolm X, Paul Robeson and Marcus Garvey. The Detroit Board of Education also officially designated 13 of its schools as being African-centered. Eventually the entire schools district adopted African centered education philosophy.

The *Public Phase* (1994-2000), was initiated by the conversion of Detroit's formerly independent African-centered schools to charter schools. This phase not only presented the movement with new challenges, but it left Detroit without any independent African-centered schools. The transition of the formerly independent schools warrants inquiry regarding the influence of the charter school movement on the CIACEM.

The four phases of the African-centered education movement are indicative of some significant divergence from the original mission, focus and philosophy of the CIACEM.

This dissertation addresses various issues that pertain to clarity and integrity regarding the original mission and intent of the CIACEM. The CIACEM emerged out of the community control of schools movement in the 1960's. The founders of the CIACEM withdrew from the community control movement opting to create independent schools that were guided by the concepts of cultural relevance, independence, nation building and sovereignty.

While numerous studies have been published on facets of African-centered education, most scholarly works focus on the effectiveness of African-centered education as a form of culturally-relevant education (Gin Wright, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2000a; Walker, 2001). This study is both distinct and important in that it seeks to analyze whether the movement has sustained its mission from its inception. It also addresses how the movement has transformed

over time. Doughty's 1973 dissertation, *A Historical Analysis of Black Education--Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement,* was the first analytical study conducted on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement (CIBSM), currently known as the Contemporary Independent African-Centered Education Movement (CIACEM). Doughty's study outlines the framework of the movement as it emerged at the movement's inception.

During the past 34 years, the CIACEM has evolved in a milieu of varying socio-economic and political conditions that have posed challenges to the movement. The emergence of African centered schools within the public domain and the transition of independent African-centered schools from independent to charter schools represent two such occurrences. This study emphasizes the significance of the various transformations and developments that occurred within the CIACEM by highlighting the continuity and retention of those tenets that led to the inception of the movement and the integrity of its founding mission. This study is guided by the following questions: What is African-centered education? What were the founding tenets of the CIACEM? Who and what factors serve as antecedents to the CIACEM? What were the perceptions of the founders of this movement as they pertain to the mission, definition and intent of the CIACEM? What are the perceptions of the current participants within the movement as they relate to its mission, definition and intent? How has the mission of the movement changed? Does the adoption of African-centered educational philosophies by public schools constitute a divergent strand of the existing movement or constitute its own unique movement? Can African-centered pedagogy be implemented in the public domain in public and charter schools designated as African-centered? From Black Power to the New Millennium: Detroit's Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement, 1972-2000 is organized in four chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter 1, *the Pre-Formal Period, 1962-1974.* This is the first period of the CIACEM in Detroit. This chapter identifies the historical antecedents of the CIACEM. It will include a brief examination of the efforts made by African-Americans in Detroit during the 19th) century to establish Detroit's first Black-owned and operated schools and contributions made by the Nation of Islam and the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life during the early 20th century. The chapter also examines the Community Control of Schools Movement and key participants as the ideological foundation of the CIACEM. Finally, the chapter will examine contributions made by the Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL), Detroit community activists and the role that Detroit high school students played as antecedents to the CIACEM before the formal phase of the movement.

This chapter provides a brief discussion of the historical efforts of people of African descent to implement educational institutions that were culturally relevant and addressed the needs of their communities. This chapter also examines the work of the Oceanhill-Brownsville community group and the movement for community control of schools in New York. The preceding occurrences spawned the emergence of the CIACEM. In addition, several local Detroit activists significantly influenced the CIACEM in Detroit, including brothers Milton Henry and the Rev. Richard Henry of GOAL and the Rev. Albert B. Cleage, founder of the Shrine of the Black Madonna church in Detroit. The efforts of thousands of Detroit junior and senior high school students who initiated and participated in several student protests, sit-ins and walkouts from 1966 through the early 1970s were also crucial.

Chapter 2, *The Independent Period 1970-1990,"* focuses on the key elements, players, and events that converged to establish the Uhuru Sasa School and the Council of Independent Black Institutions. The preceding institutions serve as ideological and philosophical models for

subsequent independent African-centered schools. This chapter also examines the efforts of Black Women Aware and the Umoja Abegunde Family Collective to establish the Alexander Crummell School, Detroit's first African-centered school, which evolved into the Aisha Shule School in 1974. Additionally, emphasis will be on the evolution of Nsoroma Institute (1989), which was started by a former Aisha Shule employee and several parents. Nsoroma Institute is of particular interest to this study because its director and staff, like those at Aisha Shule, became members of the leadership body of CIBI.

Chapter 3, "*the Independent/Public Period 1990-1995."* This period is characterized by the public adoption of the African centered-education philosophy within the Detroit Public School system (public domain). This chapter examines the efforts of those within the public domain to implement African centered-education philosophy. These efforts include the individual efforts of Detroit public schools teachers, the work of community activist organizations, and the collective efforts of the Detroit Public Schools system. The contribution of these entities facilitated the evolution of the Detroit Public Schools from teetering on the fringes of the African-centered education philosophy to its' full immersion within its curriculum, to the establishment of several African-centered schools and the adoption of African-centered education philosophy throughout the city's public school system.

Chapter 4, *"The Public Period 1995-2000.* The public period of the CIACEM is characterized by the transition of Aisha Shule and Nsoroma from independent and private to charter public schools. This chapter will examine the inception of the charter school movement in Detroit and the processes employed by Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute to become charter schools. The chapter also examines the discourse that emerged within CIBI as it was presented with the prospect of its member schools adopting public school charters. An examination will be

conducted of the philosophical debate which resulted in a chasm within the organization and the succession of Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute from CIBI. The chapter concludes with an examination of Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute as they emerged from the fray within CIBI as public schools.

The leadership of Aisha Shule introduced the prospect of transitioning to a charter school to the leadership body of the CIBI which initiated a discourse that persisted for five years. The prospect of CIBI schools possibly becoming chartered posed philosophical and ideological implications for the organization and for the larger African-centered Education Movement. Aisha Shule became chartered in 1994 and Nsoroma Institute did in 1997. The actions of the formerly independent African-centered schools challenged the organization with disorder and confusion that played out in a series of public debates and a philosophical and ideological chasm within the organization. Although the varying entities of this discourse reached a compromise, Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute resigned from CIBI in 1999. This chapter draws from various primary sources such as interviews and documents in order to obtain an understanding of the key issues regarding this rupture within the organization.

The conclusion will include a summary and the findings of this work. The conclusion will also discuss the limitations and considerations of this work as they pertain to future of the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement.

Literature Review: The Historical Roots of the CIACEM

A recent review of the literature pertaining to African-centered education indicated an abundance of literature generated since 1973. This study focuses on the mission of the CIACEM at its inception and the degree that it was retained as it evolved therefore, data that addressed content, learning outcomes and other issues, were omitted. James Doughty's dissertation, A

Historical Analysis of Black Education: Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement is foundational in that it was the first scholarly work conducted on the emergence of the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement, the basis of the CIACEM. [5] Doughty explains the presence of the earliest independent Black schools in the late 1960s, can be attributed to two important forces--a series of historic conferences by various organizations and the development of the Council of Independent Black Institutions and its political ideology. Doughty further explains that three major conferences facilitated the birth of CIBI. The hosting organizations for these conferences included the California Association for Afro-American Education and Nairobi College Workshop (August, 1970), the first Congress of Afrikan Peoples (September, 1970) and the first New York City Afrikan-American Teachers Convention (April, 1972).[6] CIBI is the longest-spanning African-centered educational organization. The Council of Independent Black Institutions' handbook (2007) asserts that CIBI serves as an umbrella organization for independent Afrikan-centered schools and individuals who are advocates for Afrikan-centered education.[7]

Doughty's work provides an ideological and philosophical perspective of the early movement. Doughty declared that CIBI members should embrace a common ideology that

---

[5] This use of this term is predicated on the idea that Contemporary Independent African-Centered Education Movement is a continuation of Doughty's Independent Black School Movement.

[6] James Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education--Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement," 88

[7] 2007 Council of Independent Black Institutions Handbook p. 1, retrieved from the authors personal papers.

serves as a unifying force and that the ideology is based on an understanding of and commitment to practice Kawaida, Black Nationalism, Black Power and Pan Afrikanism.[8]

Doughty summarizes the fundamental concepts of Independent Black Schools:

- communalism- a set of human relationship based upon cooperativeness,
- cohesiveness, and concern for Afrikan peoples transcending self
- decolonization-the acquisition of ownership and control by Afrikan people of the political, economic, social, and educational institutions which are rightfully their own;
- the Afrikan personality-- a set of attitudes, values, and behaviors which are necessary for the development, maintenance, and perpetuation of Afrikan peoples throughout the world;
- humanism--an attitudinal and behavioral perspective which stresses distinctively human rather than material and profit concerns;
- harmony- which stresses a functional congruency between man and his environment;
- Nation-building- the process of involving human and material resources for

---

[8] Doughty's key ideological concepts of the Independent Black School Movement **Kawaida** is a dynamic Black ideology of change synthesizing the significant Black thought of the late 50's and 60's designed for Afrikans in America and teaches that they have a special role to fulfill the struggle of oppressed people. Black Power which was an essential part of the ideology of the Independent Black School, it indicated that one should not beg for that which one has the power to take Black Power was comprised of four ends; self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-respect and self-Defense. Black Nationalism: the ideology that advocates for a people making their own nation, a race or people distinct and separate from others in social, cultural and political matters. The idea that people ought to possess a country, **Pan-Afrikanism:** the highest political expression of Black Power. and says that Afrikan people must govern themselves, that all Black people are Afrikan, and bound together racially, historically, culturally, politically, and emotionally.

community development, service, ownership, and control. The preceding ideological and philosophical foundation established by Doughty is echoed in the *Council of Independent Black Institutions Handbook* (2007), that asserts:

> CIBI defines Afrikan-centered education as the means by which Afrikan culture including the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to maintain and perpetuate it throughout the nation building process is developed and advanced through practice. Its aim, therefore, is to build commitment and competency within present and future generations to support the struggle for liberation and nationhood. We define nation building as the conscious and focused application of our people's collective resources, energies and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that we identify as ours. Nation building encompasses both the reconstruction of Afrikan culture and the development of a progressive and sovereign state structure with that culture.[9]

That the CIBI's current definition of African-centered education reflects the key tenants of the organization's original ideology is of particular interest to this work in that the organization and the movement has faced numerous challenges over the past 34 years. Moreover, the issues of continuity and integrity of the mission, philosophy, and ideology under gird the key question posed by the research.

The *Portland Baseline Essays* is a frequently-cited document that addresses the issue of cultural relevance in education. These essays are significant to this study because they delineate the earliest efforts of a public school system (Portland Oregon Public School System) to adopt African-centered related education philosophy. The purpose of the essays is to provide the reader with a holistic and thematic history of the culture and contributions of a specific geo-cultural group from ancient times to the present.[10] Asa Hilliard and John Henrik Clarke both served as consultants for the African aspects of the Portland Baseline Essays.

---

[9] Council of Independent Black Institution Handbook p.10

[10] Portland Baseline Essays website http://www.pps.k12.or.us/depts-c/mc-me/essays.php

Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution, by Clifford Watson and Geneva Smitherman, is another important text regarding the CIACEM in Detroit. The text tells the story of the authors' experiences as educators of African-American boys in Detroit and the early phase of the Detroit Public School Board's official adoption of African-centered education philosophy. In the opening of the text, the authors' use of quantitative data effectively supports the argument for the establishment of all-male academies designed to meet the needs of African-American males in the Detroit public schools. However, the proposal of these male academies was challenged on the basis of gender. The question of race did not present an issue in the establishment of the three male academies. Yet gender did, at least for some segments of the greater metropolitan Detroit community. Thus a federal court battle delayed the implementation of the Male Academy Task Force's recommendation and the opening of these schools in September 1991.[11]

Additionally the authors reveal that the schools were only allowed to open after being re-titled African-centered,[12] and that these schools (Malcolm X, Paul Robeson, and Marcus Garvey) were "Detroit's first African-centered schools."[13] Watson and Smitherman's study not only documents the birth of the Detroit Public School System's first African-centered schools, but it also warrants study regarding the relationship and proximity to the existing African-centered schools which are the major focus of this study.

---

[11] Clifford Watson and Geneva Smitherman, *Education African-American Males* (Chicago, Il: Third World Press, 1996), 24

[12] Clifford Watson and Geneva Smitherman, *Education African-American Males,* 24

[13] Clifford Watson and Geneva Smitherman, *Education African-American Males,* 24

Dr. Ebony Robert's 2002, *A Journey of Transformation: Teacher Professional Development at an African-centered school,* proclaims that African-centered education puts human history in its proper perspective and defends the African origin of civilization; uses sources and references which are African whenever possible; takes place in an environment which reflects African history and culture, promotes a holistic approach to learning that combines the various disciplines into a harmonious whole; seeks to develop the whole child, intellectually, physically and spiritually; uses a multi-modal approach to teaching knowledge and skills; uses cooperative learning and encourages the sharing of knowledge and resources; and helps Black children understand and change the social, economic, and political status of Africans in America and the diaspora.[14]

Robert's assertions easily meet the criteria of cultural relevance but are not clear regarding the Pan Afrikan, Black Nationalist, Nation building aspects as outlined by Doughty and the CIBI. Roberts' findings were striking in that they revealed an interesting lack of knowledge regarding African-centered education among the teachers she interviewed that worked in an African-centered public school. Roberts stated that the teachers "thought only within the boundaries of mainstream education and remained critical of African-centered education. Knowing very little about African-centered education curriculum and pedagogy, the group criticized the tenets of African-centered education in our first few meetings. What they eventually learned about African-centered education through readings made little differences in their opinion, however. They maintained their position that Black children should learn about other cultures, which they assumed did not happen in African-centered schools, and that African-

[14] Ebony Roberts, "A Journey of Transformation." PhD diss.,Michigan State University, 2002

centered schools did not prepare Black children for the "real world." Oddly enough, they felt this way even though they taught in an African-centered school."[15]

The preceding comments indicate that the teachers in these schools were unclear regarding the focus of the curriculum they were charged with administering. Furthermore, Robert's work implicates the administrators of these institutions she explains one of the informants "expressed frustration with the school's administration because she had not been given a curriculum guide or background or reading that would explain what African-centered education was and what she should be doing in her classroom.[16] Roberts' work not only clearly indicates a lack of knowledge among these teachers regarding the mission of African-centered education; it also reveals that there was an equitable issue of accountability that could easily be resolved by simply providing teachers with curriculum materials.

Roberts' assertion is relevant to the study because it seeks to clarify that there are different types of African-centered education, or that not all institutions that claim to be African -centered meet the criteria that was established at the beginning of the movement and maintained by the CIBI.

The work of African-centered educator Kofi Lomotey and researcher Subira Kifano, re-enforce the concepts of independence, self-determination and cultural relevance, as they pertain to the mission, philosophy and ideology of the CIACEM. .

Educational researcher Subira Kifano article *Afrocentric Education in Supplementary Schools: Paradigm and Practice at Mary McLeod Bethune Institute* asserts that community groups in African-American neighborhoods in the 1960s and 1970s exercised their rights to set

---

[15] Ebony Roberts, "A Journey of Transformation." 89

[16] Ebony Roberts, "A Journey of Transformation," 92

educational standards for their children in their struggle for community control.[17] Kifano's work assumes that institutional autonomy and an Afrocentric perspective are central to the creation and sustenance of these institutions.[18] That several formerly independent African-centered schools became chartered, compromises autonomy which was "seen as a means of ensuring the development of a liberatory pedagogy."

African-centered educator/scholar Kofi Lomotey's work *Independent Black Institutions: African-Centered Education Models* examines the educational standards that the founders of the CIACEM movement desired. Those standards included creating and maintaining a family atmosphere within independent Black institutions, making it culturally relevant by adopting the seven principles of Blackness known in Kiswahili as the Nguzo Saba, and creating a revolutionary, Pan-African National climate of self-determination. [19] The formerly independent African-centered schools decision to become charter schools, indicate divergence from the concept of self-determination.

Chartering The Village: The Making of an African-centered Charter School (1999), an article by urban education scholar Peter C. Murrell, is relevant and presents questions that contribute to this research.

The article presents three problematic and pertinent questions:

1. Can the convergence of these two movements result in successful African-centered schooling in the public domain?

---

[17] Subira Kifano, "Afrocentric Education in Supplementary Schools: Paradigm and Practice at Mary McLeod Bethune Institute," *Journal of Negro Education* Vol. 65, No. 2 (1996) P. 209

[18] Kifano, "Afrocentric Education in Supplementary Schools," 209.

[19] Kofi Lomotey *"*Independent Black Institutions: African-Centered Education Models" *Journal of Negro Education Vol. 61, No.4 (1992)*

2. What organizational features of the school community are important to the development of African-centered pedagogy in an independent public school?
3. What are the political, ideological, and structural impediments involved in
4. maintaining a successful African-centered pedagogy in the public domain?

The first question presents an opportunity for comparative analysis between the George Washington Carver Charter School (GWCCS), which is the subject of Murrell's research and those schools to be examined in this study. Unlike the schools that are central to this study, GWCCS began as a charter school.

The second question suggests that an African-centered charter school reflects the "convergence of two movements" which is consistent with my assertion that the transition of formerly independent African-centered schools to chartered African-centered schools compromises the founding concepts of the movement.

Murrell's third question delineates features of a school community that contributes to the development of an African-centered pedagogy of independent schools, indicating that perhaps the "independent school" was not African-centered or lacked an African-centered pedagogy. Murrell states in his article that "there are two distinct periods in the manifestation of African-centered pedagogy in the GWCCS, which correspond to the first and second year of the school's existence. In the second year, a new director and several new staff members were hired. The early features of African-centered curriculum and pedagogy focus became less and less explicit in the curriculum and daily practices."[20] Murrell's article further points out that "the African-centered ethos was primarily embodied by the director as the intellectual and spiritual leader of

[20] Peter Murrell, "Chartering the Village: African-centered Charter School" *Journal of Urban Education* Vol. 33 No. 5 (January 1999) p.575

the school and that there was too little of the wisdom of the practice in the fabric of teacher's individual pedagogy and professional interaction."[21] That the ideological and philosophical aspect of GWCCS seemed dependent upon the director is inconsistent with the African-centered approach to leadership discussed in Lee's work.

In her work *Profile of an Independent Black Institution: African Centered Education* African-centered educator/scholar Carol Lee identified the development of effective teachers and administrators as a problem in existing African-centered schools. Lee explains: All positions below that of the director are thus seen as training ground for future directors. To this end, all decisions related to the school program are first discussed and, if possible, resolved among themselves. Levels of decision-making responsibility are shared among the director, the assistant director, and the section heads.[22] Her work parallels an issue in Murrell's study. Murrell's final question concerning ideological and philosophical impediments is a good one because he makes the distinction between an African-centered pedagogy and African-centered institutions. This is noteworthy in that one can possibly implement African-centered pedagogy within a variety of genres, and the question indicates that the institution is in the "public domain" which compromises independence, an essential criteria among African-centered schools.

Dr. Jeffery D. Robinson's dissertation "The African Centered School Movement and the Detroit Public Schools" published in 2008 is important to this work and the evolving scholarship on African-centered education in Detroit, Michigan. Robinson's work focuses on the African-centered Education Movement within the Detroit Public Schools. His work provides an account

---

[21] Peter Murrell, "Chartering the Village: African-centered Charter School," 575.

[22] Carol Lee Profile of an Independent Black Institution: African-Centered Education Vol.22 No. 4 (June 1992) *Journal of Negro Education* Vol.61 No.2 (1992) p.165

of the socio-economic factors that led the leadership of the DPS to consider African-centered education philosophy as an option to more effectively educate their student body. This work also provides an account of the politic processes employed within DPS and externally that facilitated the adoption of such. Robinson's assertions that "DPS situated African-centered education within the public context and could not use many exemplars that had been implemented by independent African-centered schools"[23] and the main goal of African-centered curriculum is to correct the disarray and confusion in which Black children are educated by assigning purpose to the educational process, supports the idea that the public adoption of African-centered education philosophy is limited and has a mission distinct from that of Independent African-centered schools. Moreover, Robinson's work expands upon Watson and Smitherman's work in that it provides a more detailed and in depth account of the inception of African-centered education philosophy within the DPS and the socio-economic conditions that facilitated its' adoption.

The study, unlike Robinson's, will establish clearly defined concepts provided by the architects and participants of the CIACEM. This study will also generate data from existing African-centered schools that began as independent African-centered schools and later transitioned into public charter schools. There was no data found regarding the impact of the emergence of the public charter schools on the CIACEM which indicates a need for this research. The data generated from this study will facilitate clarity as to the definition and effectiveness of the CIACEM. This research will also reveal if in fact the emergence of public charter African-centered schools constitutes a movement philosophically and ideologically distinct from the CIACEM or merely a variation of it.

Limitations

[23] Dr. Jeffery Robinson " The African Centered School Movement And The Detroit Public Schools" p. 96

This work is challenged by three limitations; the Nataki Talibah Schoolhouse and Timbuctu Academy were omitted from the work, the voice of those within the Council of Independent Black Institutions who opposed charter schools is limited, and the limited scope of the work. Although Nataki Talibah is often perceived as an African-centered school there was no data available indicating such. Additionally, there was no indication of the school's involvement within the Council of Independent Black Institutions, nor a relationship with Aisha Shule or Nsoroma Institute. However the culturally relevant focus of the school's mission and philosophy is indicated by their website, it states that the school fosters "cultural integrity" and "multicultural and multilingual exploration," Neither of which meet the criteria of African-centered education philosophy. That Timbuctu Academy was founded as an African-centered charter school warrants inquiry however, the focus of this work was the independent schools and their transition and the public adoption of African-centered philosophy by the Detroit Public School system. Timbuctu is unique in that it was established as a charter school. However, Timbuctu's status as an "African-centered" charter school locates it within the same context of the "African-centered" schools established by the DPS and Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute after their transition. The implications of African-centered educational philosophy within the public domain are treated in chapters 3 and 4 (this work) which examines the adoption of African-centered educational philosophy within the public domain (DPS) and the challenges the accompanied Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute's transition to charter schools.

The brief focus on the debates that occurred within the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) regarding the independent/public African-centered education debate also posed limitations. The ability to obtain a more balanced perspective of those who opposed public "African-centered" schools within the CIBI was challenged by gatekeepers and key

persons that opted not to participate in this work. Finally I believe a major limitation of this study is the timeframe of the work. There is an eleven year period (2000-2011) that exceeds the scope of this study (1970-2000) during this period numerous events have occurred that may have impacted the evolution of this movement in both the private and public domains. The inquiry established by this work warrants that the issues outlined therein are revisited and new challenges are considered in future inquiry. The emergence of new phenomena that may impact the Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement include new educational reforms such as No Child No Left Behind, the dissolution of the Detroit School Board, the imposition of a financial manager over the Detroit public system, and the downsizing of Detroit public schools to name a few.

Research Methods

A major challenge emerged as I conceived and proposed this study to my dissertation committee. Having been a participant within the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement for more than 2 decades positioned me as insider within the movement. Moreover, the prospect of bias negatively impacting my collection and reporting of the data was also a possibility. Traditional research methods advocate that the researcher allows reasonable distance between themselves and the topic/subject of one's research. My position as an insider afforded me access to a wealth of primary and secondary sources which would have otherwise been unavailable. Throughout this process my dissertation committee members consistently served as a force inhibiting bias from emerging within this work. Moreover to sustain a grounded perspective in conducting this work I have employed a methodology which combines traditional historical methods and an Afrocentric approach.

The study will be framed by the three key overarching assumptions of the Afrocentric Paradigm. One, this research is grounded in the history and culture of the subjects of the research. Two, it is emancipatory in that it contributes to the subjects' emancipation. Three, it is critical in that it seeks to answers questions and solve problems which lead to enhanced life chances of the subject of the designated research.[24] The tenet of African agency additionally serves as a guiding principle of the study in that it seeks to accurately identify the antecedents, architects, and major contributors to development of the Contemporary Independent African-Centered Education Movement from its inception through its current developmental stages. The proposed historical methods include oral histories, interviews, and content analyses of both primary and secondary sources. Interviews will be conducted with people who were key players in every phase of the Contemporary Independent African-Centered Education Movement. The preceding will consist of a series of interviews of students, parents, and staff members (teachers and administrators) and community members that were instrumental in implementing and sustaining the movement. These interviews will be conducted to determine the perception of the participants of the movement at its inception and how they may have changed during the movement's historical unfolding. Content analyses of various documents including curriculum, lesson plans, student, employee, and parent handbooks, institutional charters, constitutions, and by-laws, convention books, etc., will be conducted by the researcher as well.

---

[24] Terry Kershaw, "Toward an Afrocentric Paradigm: An Assessment and Some Directions," *Journal of Black Studies* 22 (1992): 479.

Chapter 1

The Pre-Formal Period, 1962-1972

The CIACEM, which is a direct byproduct of the Black Power era, helped lay the foundation for the modern post-civil rights and educational reform movements. This chapter examines the origins of independent Black education in Detroit, and the people, institutions and ideologies that were involved.

The Pre-Formal period of the CIACEM lasted from 1962 until 1972. This period precedes the formal inception of the movement and includes key contributing events and individuals that serve as chronological and ideological antecedents to the movement. From the mid-1800s through the 20th century, African-Americans in Detroit have made significant efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of the education available to their children.

This chapter will include an examination of the efforts to establish the first Black-owned and operated schools in Detroit during the 19th century and the contributions made by the Nation of Islam and the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life during the early 20th century. This chapter will also examine the role that the Group on Advance Leadership, Detroit community activists and high school students played during this phase.

During the mid-1800s, African-Americans established the first Black-owned and operated school in Detroit. By the early 1930s, members of The Nation of Islam and the Detroit chapter of the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life established independent Black schools and programs that were culturally-relevant. This struggle continued with the efforts of GOAL and evolved with the integration of Detroit Public Schools in the late 1950s and advocacy for culturally-relevant textbooks and curriculum in the early 1960s. During the late 1960s, GOAL's participation in the struggle for African-American education heightened as key

members became leaders in the local Community Control of Schools Movement (CCSM). The involvement of hundreds of students and parents, who pushed for transformation of Detroit's educational system, further intensified the movement. Their efforts were later thwarted by the decentralization of the Detroit Public Schools.

The CIACEM emerged during the Black Power Movement in the early 1970s. While it is typically believed that the Independent Black School Movement (IBEM) emerged out of the struggle of the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community group in New York, there are other key factors that contributed to the birth of Detroit's CIACEM. Those factors are the local struggle to integrate public schools, the struggle for CCSM and the student protest movement that culminated in the decentralization of Detroit Public School.

The Early Independent Education Period

The roots of the Independent Black School Movement (IBSM) go back to the late 1789 when the founder of Black Freemasonry Prince Hall started a school for African-American children in the home of his son Primus Hall, in Boston, Massachusetts. Hall ran the school until 1803. As early as 1819 and 1820, African-American children in Detroit were receiving brief educational attention from the Sunday School Association of Detroit. However, it would not be until 1836 that any systematic effort was made to educate them.

White church leaders and some Blacks collaborated to build the Fort Street School Hall and Church but it closed in 1839 during the depression of the same year which "led some white benefactors to respond to the pressure of the times by withdrawing their financial aid. By 1842 the school was taken over by the Detroit School Board after the state established free public

schools and authorized a separate tax-supported colored school."[25] Even though African-American children were receiving an inferior education compared to whites, their parents still had to bear the double burden of paying the general [education] tax while supporting private schools.[26]

During the mid1800s, African-American churches in Detroit worked closely with "colored schools" and competed for control of the schools just as they competed for control of the city's social and political institutions.[27] Shortly after the city of Detroit established tax-supported colored schools, a group of Black parents led by William Lambert and M.J. Lightfoot, established an independent day school. This was the earliest effort by African-Americans to establish an independently-owned and controlled school. A white man assumed leadership of the school in 1846 and it closed the following year.

During the 19th century, African Americans embarked on a legal struggle to desegregate Detroit schools. "Blacks would agitate and litigate against segregated schools in Detroit for over a quarter of century," according to American Studies professor David Katzman.[28] This struggle persisted for more than 100 years, however there would emerge a divergent group of African Americans that advocated for an alternative approach to educating African-American children.

Detroit's first independent schools were the earliest socio-political predecessors of the CIACEM, followed in 1932 by the Nation of Islam and the Detroit Branch of the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life. The Nation of Islam under the direction of Elijah

---

[25] David Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, (Chicago: University Illinois Press) 22.

[26] David Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, (Chicago: University Illinois Press), 22

[27] Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 22.

[28] Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 22

Muhammad established the University of Islam in Detroit in 1932 and in Chicago, Illinois in 1934.[29] The Detroit school was raided in April 1934 under allegations of subversive teaching and that students were drawn from legal and accredited institutions."[30] According to a 1934 article in the *Detroit Free Press* 14 instructors were arrested and records showing that 400 students attended the school, were seized during the raid.

Although the schools were called universities, they were actually secondary and middle schools that sought to teach Black self-knowledge, self-reliance, and self-discipline.[31]

In his book, *Black Nationalism,* Dr. Essien-Udom writes about Elijah Muhammad's critical view of mainstream education. He quotes Muhammad as saying that "Negro education was designed by the slave master or their sons, to keep the Negro in his place, not to enable him to think for himself, to inquire into his past, to be proud of his heritage prior to slavery and to have a desire to become independent economically or otherwise."[32] Essien-Udom explains that in the Nation of Islam schools or "universities," there was an educational model that "taught about the African origins of and contributions to civilizations…and placed Black people at the center of civilizations and made them feel good about themselves."[33]

---

[29] Lawson Bush, "Independent Black Institutions In America: A rejection of Schooling, and Opportunity for Education," The *Journal Urban Education,* March (1997): 106

[30] *Detroit Free Press,* Staff "Islam Cult Faces Court" April 17, 1934

[31] Rashid, Hakim and Zakiyah Muhammad, "The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools: Pioneers in the Development of Islamic Education in America", *The Journal of Negro Education* , (1992): 179

[32] E.U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago 1971), 231.

[33] Rashid and Muhammad, "The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools", 179

From the 1930s until the early 1960s, the University of Islam stood virtually alone in its efforts to provide African-American children with a world view that stressed self-knowledge, self-reliance, and self-discipline.[34]

The Detroit chapter of the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life, also made a significant contribution to the CIACEM. The inclusion of accurate African and African-American history and education has been a major focus of the association since it was founded in 1924. Between 1935 and 1955, the Association which had more than 1,500 members, introduced limited study of Black history and culture in the public schools and to a greater degree in Black churches and clubs throughout the metropolitan area.[35] It would not be until the Black Power era that African-Americans would begin implementing educational initiatives that were comparable to what the Association had started decades ago. From the 1920s well into the late 1950s, African-Americans in Detroit struggled to obtain quality education and end legal segregation in the public schools

In his book, *The Rise and fall of an Urban School System,* Urban Education professor Jeffrey Mirel discusses the conflict that went on between members of the Black community and the school board members throughout the 1920s and 1930s over racial and educational issues. "Black leaders protested the small number of Black teachers. In 1926, there were only 40 out of more than 5,800 and all of them taught at the elementary level. They protested the board policy of placing Black teachers only in schools with large numbers of Black students and cited the indignities of singing of discriminatory songs in music programs. They also protested how the

---

[34] Rashid and Muhammad, "The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools", 106

[35] Harvey C. Jackson, "Summary History of the Detroit Branch of the Association for the Study of Negro History of Life," *Negro History Bulletin*, October (1962): Back page

Black seniors of Eastern High School's class of 1934 were excluded from the senior class group photograph. They had to have their pictures taken separate from the whites."[36]

By 1954, the landmark Brown v. Topeka KA., Board of Education case was handed down. This decision ended legal segregation and heightened the African-American struggle for integration. Although there were numerous changes in the areas of public facilities and accommodations following the Brown decision (largely through the struggle of Black people in the streets), local and state officials continued to procrastinate.[37] Resistance to integration of the Detroit public schools after the Brown decision was evident in "administrative gerrymandering of school attendance boundaries that deliberately segregated Black and white children."[38] The African-American struggle against this type of institutional racism spanned from the 1920s into the late 1950s. GOAL emerged in the early 1960s as major advocates for the integration of the Detroit public schools. Moreover, their commitment to the education of Detroit's African-American children was sustained as a new tide of Black Nationalism prevailed as the decade progressed. GOAL members played a major role in demanding culturally-relevant textbooks in Detroit schools and the local CCSM, both of which were instrumental in the development of the African-centered education movement. GOAL was founded by the leaders of the Black Power

---

[36] Jeffrey Mirel *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 258 Mayor's Inter-Racial Committee, The Negro in Detroit, 17-20 Detroit Common Council, *Journal of the Common Council*, 1932 (Detroit: City of Detroit,1932) 505; *Detroit Tribune* 6/27/33 (In Mirel Page 258)

[37] Abdul Alkalimat, *Introduction to Afro-American Studies: A Peoples College Primer* (Chicago: Twenty-First Century Books. (1986), 239.

[38] Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System* (Ann Arbor*:* University of Michigan Press, 1999), 258.

movement, Rev. Albert Rev. Cleage and Richard and Milton Henry, according to Grace Lee Boggs.[39]

In the early 1960s, GOAL joined the struggle of the Sherrill School Parents Committee. In 1959 "school administrators had drawn a new attendance boundary that barred a small number of Black students from Sherrill School from attending the overcrowded, but overwhelmingly white Mackenzie High School." The new boundary assigned these students to the less crowded but largely Black Central High School and Chadsey High School.[40] The parents of students attending Sherrill were outraged and formed an interracial committee which was regularly chaired by the Rev. Cleage, to address the matter.[41]

The committee determined that the school board's decision was discriminatory. They carried out a number of protests that delayed the board's plans. In 1961, the board was forced to come up with a revised version of their original plan. According to the revised plan, eighth graders at Sherrill would be assigned to a school in a predominantly Black district, thereby insuring that they would not attend Mackenzie High School."[42] The Sherrill School Parents Committee, formed as a result of the board's action, sued the board claiming that they were "operating a separate and unequal school system for Black children."[43] The Sherrill parents committee dropped the lawsuit in 1964 due to a change in the board's composition.[44] Although

---

[39] Grace Boggs, *Living for Change*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 120.
[40] Mirel, *the Rise and fall of an Urban School System*, 261.
[41] Mirel, *the Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 261.
[42] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 261-2.
[43] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 262
[44] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 264

the GOAL'S support of the committee was an integrationist effort, the organization increasingly became Black Nationalist-oriented.

In March 1962, GOAL launched a campaign against the Detroit Public School System's use of racist textbooks. The campaign was spearheaded by Richard Henry who along with other GOAL members, confronted school board members about the textbooks, according to a July 7, 1962 article in the *Michigan Chronicle*. "I'll go to jail before I allow my son to return to a history class in which these objectionable text are being used,"[45] Henry said at the meeting, according to the *Michigan Chronicle.* Henry said that the textbook *Our United States* demonstrated a lack of consideration of the Negro's role in founding civilization.[46] He also noted that his initial complaint outlined 21 objections to two textbooks that had been submitted in March of that year. Henry's petition sparked a dialogue between GOAL and the school board members that lasted over four years. Richard Henry would revisit this discussion.

Henry sent a letter to board members on September 13, 1966, in which he referred to a critique of textbooks that GOAL had submitted in 1964, and that the board members never responded to."[47] He also stated that since that time, his daughter Marylyn was presented with racist materials in her 9th grade social studies class at Winter Halter Jr. High School just as her brother had been previously. Outraged, Henry told board members that he would remove his daughter from school and urge others to do the likewise [48]

---

[45] *Michigan Chronicle*, "I'll Go to Jail Says Boy's Father" 12/1/62, 1

[46] *Michigan Chronicle*, "I'll Go to Jail, says Boy's Father" 12/1/62, 1

[47] Richard Henry to DPS Superintendent Norman Drachler under the auspices of GOAL. Drachler Papers box 98, The Hoover Institute at Stanford University, San Jose, California.

[48] Richard Henry to DPS Superintendent Norman Drachler. Drachler Papers box 98, 2 The Hoover Institute, Stanford University.

In 1966-School Superintendent Norman Drachler began a thorough review of the textbooks and curricula with an eye toward eliminating racially-biased material and adding substantially more Black history to the social studies program. By the start of the 1968-69 school-year Drachler had banned the most offensive text, started an influential national campaign to get publishers to include materials on Black history and culture in their books, and transformed the curriculum along "multicultural" lines, with a strong emphasis on Black history.[49] It appeared that the efforts of Henry and GOAL were beginning to have impact. As the Henry-Drachler correspondence ended in 1966; Black communities in New York and Washington D.C. began their contemporary struggle to control the schools. Rev. Albert B. Rev. Cleage another key GOAL member would play a major role in Detroit's CCSM.

Community Control of Schools Movement

1966-1970

The CCSM not only became a major focus of the emergent militancy of the mid-sixties, but its founding principles laid the ideological foundation for the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement (CIBEM). The CCSM is defined as a movement of Black people forming into organizations that may or may not have formal ties but which have as their common goal the transference of the power to control their schools to the local school community.[50] The first two school systems to establish community-controlled schools were in New York city and Washington D.C.[51] Detroit historian Sidney Berkowitz further suggests that the "two

---

[49] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 307.

[50] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 20.

[51] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 57.

phenomena which were probably the most directly responsible for the Detroit CCSM finally emerging were (1) the eruption of the civil disorder in the Black community of Detroit during the summer of 1967, and (2) the experiments with CCSM in New York City and Washington D.C." This study draws upon the struggle in New York City because the literature indicated a link between Detroit and New York both during the CCSM and the later Contemporary Independent Black School Movement (CIBSM). The following section includes subsections on the CCSM in New York and Detroit along with a subsection on the Student protest movement in Detroit that proved to be an integral aspect of the Detroit CCSM. The Student protest movement on college campuses throughout the United States is well documented. However, much less is known about student protest at neither the high school level nor the role that high school students played in the movement for control of schools.

New York Community Control of Schools Movement

The CCSM in New York emerged as a result of African-American and Hispanic parents' dissatisfaction with the existing school board's efforts to educate their children. "The contemporary struggle to control the schools in the Black community began in East Harlem with the opening of Intermediate School (IS) 201, in September of 1966."[52] The opening of IS 201 appeared to be an early victory in the ongoing struggle for community involvement in New York City schools. In the early phase of this struggle, the New York Board of Education re-configured its schools, and created IS 201 as an effort to create an "integrated school population."[53] In an effort to create an integrated structure, "the Board of Education went against the parent council of IS 201. An ad hoc council was formed to carry through the "promise" of

[52] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 84.
[53] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 158.

school integration. The council announced that the school was to have a fifty-percent Black and fifty- percent Latino student population and a Jewish (white) principal."[54] Dissatisfied with the actions of the school board, the "East Harlem parents, students, and community leaders boycotted IS 201 because of the lack of fulfillment of promises (and accompanying lies) on integration, and educational relationships between a university and IS 201 and special programs."[55]

During the following year, the New York Board of Education attempted to appease the dissatisfied parents, students and community activists. Their efforts included the decision to "allow community participation and tacitly, it also agreed to demands for a Black principal to be chosen by the community"[56] From 1966 to 1967, several meetings occurred among New York community activists, the board of education, and the teacher's union. Their assumed objective was to "develop a 'realistic' plan for community involvement in school policy."[57] In 1967, the New York Board of Education made an effort at decentralization and created three "demonstration districts" that included "IS 201 in East Harlem, Two Bridges in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and Ocean Hill-Brownsville in Brooklyn."[58] Along with the creation of these demonstration districts, the board would allow the community to elect representatives to serve on their governing boards. Although some degree of community involvement was granted, it was not without struggle. From 1967 until 1970, the community boards encountered numerous challenges. These challenges included several legal battles as well as ongoing power struggles

[54] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 158.
[55] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education,"158.
[56] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 160.
[57] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 160.
[58] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 167

between the community, the board, and the teacher's union. Additionally, during the three years between 1968 and 1970, the teacher's union and the board experienced several strikes. Finally, in 1970 the New York School Board presented a new plan of decentralization, which limited the power of the local boards. The new plan had five main points. It maintained that:

1. the employment and placement of educational personnel will be carried out by the central board of Education
2. the local boards would have a limited role in curriculum development
3. the demonstration districts would be absorbed into the new structure of thirty-two local school districts to be governed by elected school boards
4. a new interim central Board of Education, consisting of one member appointed by each of the five borough presidents, would serve for a period of one year
5. the establishment of a new seven-member board, five to be elected-again one from each borough-and two to be appointed by the Mayor for a four year term.[59]

Shortly after the struggle for CCSM was implemented in New York, Detroit found itself engaged in a similar struggle.

Detroit Community Control of Schools Movement

Detroit Historian Sidney Berkowitz asserts that the eruption of civil disorder during the summer of 1967 and the CCSM experiments in New York and Washington D.C. were the two phenomena most responsible for Detroit's CCSM. Additionally, explaining the former resulted in a resurgence of Black Power and self-determination, while the later provided the Black

[59] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education", 167.

communities in Detroit a specific application of self-determination to their schools.[60] The preceding assertions are best illustrated in the efforts of Detroit's key Black Nationalist individuals and organizations. A plethora of individuals and groups emerged during the CCSM.

This study focuses on those individuals and groups whose ideological and philosophical perspectives were the most consistent with the founding principles of the CIACEM. Community activists Rev. Cleage, Grace Boggs, and Dan Aldridge were important individuals of the movement. The City-Wide Citizens Action Committee (CCAC), the Inner City Organizing Committee (ICOC), Citizens for Community Control of Schools (CCCS), the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) serve as the key organizations of Detroit's CCSM.

Rev. Cleage's earlier efforts to impact the education of African-American children are indicated in the preceding discussion about GOAL. From 1966 until 1971, Rev. Cleage was one of Detroit's "prime movers of the Community Control Schools Movement."[61] In Detroit Rev. Cleage's early involvement in the CCSM was revealed in his participation in the ICOC. Community activist Grace Boggs explained that in early 1967 "Jimmy (Boggs) and I organized the Inner City Organizing Committee in Detroit . . . Rev. Cleage was named president and Jimmy (Boggs) vice president."[62] Although the ICOC was founded to develop rank and file members for leadership, the organization also took on the struggle for CCSM.[63] They organized Detroit students and parents in two councils, the Inner City Students Council (ICSC) and the

---

[60] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 101.

[61] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 92.

[62] Boggs, *Living for Change,* 137.

[63] Boggs, *Living for Change,* 137.

Inner City Parents Council (ICPC).[64] According to Detroit Historian Sidney Fine, Rev. Cleage became the chairman of the Inner City Parents Council in 1967. In June 1967, the parents' council presented the school board with the first formal demand it had received for "Black schools for Black children." The Parents council wanted Black schools to be manned by Black administrators, Black principals and Black teachers. Rev. Cleage claimed that Black children could not identify with White academic personnel who were often guilty of a "condescending attitude" toward Black students and their parents.[65]

The Parents council advocated for education for their children that stressed "Afro-American history and culture and the development of the creative abilities of Black children in writing, the arts, and dance."[66] On June 13, 1967 the Inner City Parents Council presented the board of education with a blistering report on the condition of Black education in Detroit.[67] The report declared that "according to their own statistics, the Detroit Board of Education and school administration have failed to educate our inner-city children."[68] They also pointed out the low scholastic achievement, high dropout rate and excessive turnover of faculty.[69] School board members A.L. Zwerdling and Remus Robinson dismissed the report as bigotry and one with

---

[64] Boggs, *Living for Change*, 138.

[65] Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 45.

[66] Fine, *Violence in the Model*, 46.

[67] Report entitled *What Do We Owe Our Children* Presented to the Detroit Board of Education by Reverend Albert Rev. Cleage June 13, 1967 on behalf of the ICSC published in the Citywide Citizens Action

[68] Rev. Albert B. Cleage, "What Do We Owe Our Children," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 4, 1967. 1.

[69] Rev. Albert B. Cleage, "What Do We Owe Our Children," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 4, 1967. 1.

"phony issues" that were "unrelated to the real problems of the school system."[70] Rev. Cleage and the ICOC laid much of the problem with the school board's failure to implement the Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity's recommendation to place more Black teachers and Black administrators in the schools.[71] Rev. Cleage emphasized the negative impact of the existing education. "Afro American [the] child who is forced to attend a school in which there is a preponderance of white teachers, white principals, white department heads, white counselors and white administrators finds himself in a situation which can only underscore his sense of powerlessness and inferiority," he said. [72] Rev. Cleage understood the negative impact that white educators had on African-American children and also realized the importance of establishing culturally-relevant curriculum. "An effective school curriculum for inner-city schools must differ markedly from the curriculum of the outlying schools," said Rev. Cleage. He demanded "a curriculum and accompanying books and materials that would support the development of a positive self-image for Black students." This type of curriculum Rev. Cleage explained would provide African-American children with a knowledge of "their history, their culture and their destiny…the creative abilities of Afro-American children in the arts, in dance, and in creative writing must be developed but not at the expense of academic studies."[73]

---

[70] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 310.

[71] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 92.

[72] Sidney Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools", Reference refers to a mimeographed pamphlet Inner City Parents Council Present Programs for Quality Education in Inner City Schools, Detroit, June, 1967, pp. 4-5 (mimeographed), Berkowitz 93.

[73] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 11.

The ICPC's demand for an equitable presence of African-American educators and culturally-relevant curriculum are two of the foundational principals of African-centered education. The ICPC's position on African-American education was undergirded by Black Nationalist assumptions that were a departure from integrationist. Rev. Cleage explained on behalf of the Parents council "After 400 years of the white man's separation, Black people are rejecting the dream of integration as the goal for their struggle and are instead finding pride in their history, culture and power, seeking to develop their own independent leadership, organizations and programs, determined that the separation which the white man has forced upon them shall now be used for their advancement rather than for their exploitation."

The following month, on July 23, 1967, the infamous three-day rebellion occurred that resulted in turmoil, several deaths, numerous injuries, and the destruction and damage to Detroit properties to the tune of millions of dollars. Shortly after the rebellion Rev. Cleage began a weekly column in the *Michigan Chronicle*. The articles were replete with community control themes. "Fortunately there is a growing number of Black teachers and administrators who understand that Black consciousness, Black pride, Black history and Black teachers and administrators are necessary before Black children can expect to be educated.,[74] said Rev. Cleage in a November 4, 1967 *Michigan Chronicle* article titled "*What Do We Owe Children."*

An October 28, 1967 article written by Rev. Cleage pointed out the effectiveness of the ICOC. "The Board of Education has just appointed 19 administrators of which 10 are Black," Rev. Cleage wrote. Expressing that "the appointments were made because the Inner City Organizing Committee (ICOC) and the Inner City Parents Committee (ICPC) have been

[74] Rev. Albert B. Cleage, "What Do we Owe Our Children," *Michigan Chronicle,* November 4, 1967, 16A.

demanding that all administrative vacancies be filled by Blacks until Black administrators equal the 57 percent of Black percentage of the school population. We still demand that."[75] Rev. Cleage also expressed the expectation of accountability of those appointed. "We also expect the new Black appointees to recognize that their promotions are the result of pressure by the Black community and that they are accountable to the Black community," he said. Very clear of the limitations of their accomplishments and the depth of their goals, Rev. Cleage said, "these ten appointments do not begin to mean Black control of our schools. And until the Black community controls its schools, we can only expect more explosions like the one at the Knudsen Junior High School last week."[76] The Knudsen incident referenced by Rev. Cleage occurred when Black students at Knudsen Junior High School went on a rampage in October 1967 and vandalized the schools because they wanted to replace a white principal.[77]

Rev. Cleage was also the chairperson of the City-Wide Action Committee (CCAC) that was founded in the aftermath of the rebellion of the summer of 1967. CCAC was formed as an umbrella organization of Black Nationalist groups, united to dialogue with Detroit's white establishment. University of Michigan professor Hubert Locke explained, "Rev. Cleage was able to unify under his leadership a number of the segments of Black Nationalism in Detroit an achievement notably lacking among Black nationalists elsewhere in the United States." [78] Berkowitz posited that CCAC advocated for community control from the perspective of Black

---

[75] Rev. Albert B. Cleage, "Individuals Are Weak, The Nation Is Strong*," Michigan Chronicle,* October 28, 1967, 16A

[76] Albert B. Rev. Cleage, "Individuals Are Weak, The Nation Is Strong, *" Michigan Chronicle* October 28, 1967, 16A

[77] Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 435

[78] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," Hubert Locke quoted in Berkowitz, 102.

teachers and Black administrators being accountable to the Black community to the broader position of total control of Black schools by the Black community.[79] Community activist Grace Boggs who also worked with CCAC, explained that the group organized two conferences to explore how CCSM would transform education, a CCSM conference to which all kinds of big shots in the Detroit public administration came, and a Black Teachers Workshop, attended by Preston Wilcox, and Rhody McCoy from the Oceanhill-Brownsville struggle in New York, which brought out hundreds of teachers.[80] In a presentation given by community activist Dan Aldridge at the latter of the preceding conferences, he implies this was the initial connection between New York and Detroit's CCSM. "In a way," Aldridge said, "it is amazing that this idea (CCSM) is just reaching Detroit. As Black people in Detroit, we find ourselves facing the same problem as our brothers elsewhere. Our children cannot spell, read, write, think analytically, or make important decisions. Our children do not know their history, heritage or understand their position in today's world."[81]

Along with the above listed contributions made by Rev. Cleage, his *Michigan Chronicle* column continuously reflected his support for the CCSM and the numerous African-American youth who participated in Detroit's student protest movement.

Grace Boggs' contributions to the CCSM exceeded her work with the Inner City Organizing Committee and the City-Wide Citizens Council. Boggs also lectured extensively on the topic of CCSM, and edited the CCSM magazine *Foresight* that "presented articles about

---

[79] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 103.

[80] Boggs, *Living for Change*, 139

[81] Dan Aldridge, "Serious Business: Community Control of Schools," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 16, 1968

community control of school activities in various cities throughout the United States as well as local Detroit activities and issues." Boggs also published several related articles and pamphlets on the topic, such as "*Education: The Great Obsession,"* and *"Towards a New System of Education."*[82] The preceding articles reflected numerous CCSM-related themes such as the need for African-Americans to lead the movement for CCSM, the need for a new system of education, the failure of existing education, and the lack of commitment to the education of African-American teachers, administrators and other professionals charged with educating African-Americans.

Berkowitz posits that Boggs also influenced the philosophical underpinnings of the All-African Peoples Union (AAPU), an organization that advocated for a new educational system for African-Americans. Their 1971 publication, *Education to Govern,* written by Boggs and Aldridge, reflected several ideas that were consistent with CCSM and African-centered education. Among the ideas were that the existing educational system could not be changed but needed to be replaced, that the community should become the curriculum, and that [83] "education must now be for the purpose of governing, that is, for the purpose of changing society and for changing ourselves simultaneously."[84] The AAPU urged African-Americans in Detroit to "differentiate decentralization from community control," asserting that "decentralization is in fact a form of domestic neocolonialism by which Blacks are given the illusion of power through

---

[82] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools", 1973, The author references Grace Lee Boggs, "Education: The Great Obsession," *Monthly Review* XXII (September, 1970) 18-39; "Towards a System of Education," Ann Arbor, Michigan, October, 1968. (Mimeographed)

[83] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 117.

[84] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between The Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 117.

local governing boards, while the real power remains in the hands of the white-dominated central administration."[85]

Community activist Dan Aldridge was also a key figure in Detroit's Community Control of Schools Movement. Along with co-authoring *Education to Govern*, Aldridge wrote a weekly column in the *Michigan Chronicle* that strongly advocated for the CCSM."[86] His contributions to the CCSM were exhibited in his involvement with the AAPU and its predecessor, Students for Justice, which was one of the groups associated with the CCSM.[87] Aldridge also served as the director of the Detroit chapter of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

A nationwide student protest movement emerged throughout the country during the same time as the CCSM. Although the guiding principles of the national student protest movement exceeded those of the CCSM, the leadership of the CCSM incorporated student protest in the CCSM. The following section examines the student protest movement in Detroit as it relates to CCSM and the evolution of African-centered education in Detroit.

Detroit Student Protest Movement 1966-1971

The student protest movement at the local level also serves as an antecedent to Detroit's CIACEM. The earliest examples of student protest were those illustrated by student activists that were involved in the National Association for the Advancement for Color People (NAACP) and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Their efforts were demonstrated by the

---

[85] Education to Govern, 7 cited in Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between The Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 117.

[86] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 329.

[87] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of The Relationship Between The Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 116.

numerous sit-ins, walkouts, teach-ins and demonstrations they conducted in the South during the 1950s and 1960s.

African American Studies professor Maulana Karenga explains that the student movement was guided by four major thrusts: civil rights, free speech, anti-war and Black Power.[88] The student protest movement first emerged on college campuses throughout the United States by 1965. The civil rights thrust gave way to Black power the final thrust of the student protest movement.[89] The Black Power Movement began in midst of the urban rebellions and the decline of the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Power movement ushered in a new dialog about relationships of power in society and the university, the pervasive character of racism, and the need for struggle to overturn the established order and create a more just society.[90]

Karenga further asserts "During the late 60's, the concept of Black Power was the dominant theme in the emotions, thought and actions of Black people. Black Power is best defined by describing the four ends of Black Power: self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-respect and self-defense. They represent the things Black people want to achieve through the exercise of power."[91] It would not be long before the movement became prevalent on high school campuses throughout the country. Black Power advocates stressed political, economic, and cultural self-determination. They also argued for relevant education and called on students to engage in struggle in the classroom, on campus in general and in society not only to improve the

---

[88] Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles: University Sankore Press, 1993), 8.

[89] Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies,* 11.

[90] Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies,* 11

[91] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education",101

quality of education, but also to improve the life of African people and change society itself.[92] The preceding issues were resonant in the local student protest movement in Detroit from 1966 until 1971. Mirel explains that during this period the Northern High School boycott in 1966 and numerous disturbances during the 1967-68 school year, were preludes to more violent confrontations that began in the fall of 1968 and lasted through 1971.

Mirel's work provides a somewhat problematic context of these events in that he contextualizes them as "spontaneous protests by students against specific personnel, events or conditions." Although Mirel never identifies the efforts of these students as a movement, he does connect their actions to key adult organizations that were involved in Detroit's Community of Control Schools Movement. He posits that several of the disturbances that occurred during this period were orchestrated, or exploited, by adult organizations with larger political and social agendas. Mirel's analysis is problematic in that he later asserts that the Citizens for Community Control of Schools not only "considered student unrest a means for gaining control of the schools," they were also "ready to move to direct action, if necessary, such as pickets, boycotts, sit-ins, liberation of schools and actual takeover of the schoolhouse until the community obtains real decision-making power."[93]

Mirel erroneously organizes these activities in three "categories of conflict." He said there were conflicts over school personnel, symbols of Black Nationalism and culture, and verbal and physical violence against administrators, teachers and students efforts of these student activities. Mirel overlooks the fact that the efforts of the students and their correspondent organizations were motivated by the desire for more effective education for African-American

---

[92] Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies,* 12.

[93] Mirel,*The Rise and Fall of an Urban School District*, 331.

children. The first of these student protests occurred at Northern High School. The protest at Northern revolved around "what they alleged to be inferior educational opportunity and a somewhat less than responsive school administration."[94]

Contrary to Mirel's allegation, the Northern students and parents were critical of the quality of education at their school. Karamu Davis, a parent of a former Northern High school student, learned of problems at the school from his daughter. After investigating, he found out that one of the coaches was teaching the history classes. Davis said he was furious when he found out. He also recalled that one of his co-workers, who was married to a teacher at the school, told him about plans to organize over the problems there. According to Davis, the co-worker said that Don Wilson and other Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) members were meeting at his house that evening and they were planning a strike and going to be organizing and making signs at my house,"[95] Davis said he attended the meeting and became involved in the boycott. The following day, parents were instructed to "surround the children in a circle while they conducted their demonstration," [96] This was done because the organizers were not sure how the police and school authorities would react to their protests.

CORE's involvement in the Northern boycott was supported by Detroit historians Sidney Fine and Jeff Mirel. Fine explains that the students "received some advice and help from the chairman of the Detroit chapter of CORE, but what happened was basically a kid's

[94] Berkowitz, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between The Detroit CCSM and the 1971 Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools," 105.
[95] Karamu Davis, interview by author, Detroit, MI, November 10, 2008.
[96] Davis, Interview by author, Nov.10, 2008

movement."[97] Mirel's remarks more effectively indicate a collaborative effort among the students, parents and broader community. He explains that "CORE provided them with offices and helped to organize the protest" and that "some Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) members saw the walkout as a golden opportunity to strike at both the principal, whom they wanted removed, and to show the rival Detroit Education Association (DEA)"[98] that the Northern protest was more than a "kids movement." The students were strongly supported by parents, the broader community and advocates of community control of schools, including CORE, the *Michigan Chronicle*, Detroit Federation of Teachers members and other liberal Detroiters including Rev. Cleage.

The April 8, 1966 edition of the *Detroit Free Press* reported that on April 7, 1966 "More than 2,300 Northern High School students marched around the school for an hour Thursday, protesting the principal's refusal to allow a critical editorial to appear in the school newspaper."[99] The article was written by Charles Colding, a Northern senior who charged that that "students who graduate from inner-city schools are not well prepared for college or jobs."[100] The next day, a *Detroit Free Press* article stated that the "editorial charged that the 46-year-old school has a narrow curriculum, low academic standards and inadequate physical facilities."[101] In a meeting on the same day, Samuel Brownell, superintendent of Detroit public schools, commended the students and told them that a committee had been set up to create guidelines for

---

[97] Fine, *Violence in the Model City,* 53

[98] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 301

[99] Letter from student protest leaders in the Northern High School Boycott 1966, letter dated April 15, 1966 found in Remus Robinson Papers box#12 Folder# 32 entitled Northern High School Incident, Walter P. Reuther Library.

[100] Susan Holmes, "Concern is Voiced on School Protest," *Detroit Free Press,* April 9, 1966, 1.

[101] Susan Holmes, "Concern is Voiced on School Protest," *Detroit Free Press,* April 9, 1966, 1

future editorials, "More than 50 of the 88 members of the staff supported the students," according to the article.[102]

Although the students would be out for spring break the following week, their efforts continued. A letter dated April 15, 1966, signed by student protest leaders Judy Walker, Michael Bacthlor, and Colding, was submitted to Brownell with a list of demands that included the removal of the school principal Mr. Carty, and the police officer, Mr. Lucas. The students also demanded a written response by April 16 and threatened to "follow the course of action outlined to you at our meeting of Wednesday, April 13, which was that the student body would not return to school."[103] Carty returned to Northern on April 20th. Student anger at this action as well as their dissatisfaction with the character of the board hearing the night before provoked a boycott of classes by all but about 200 students on April 20th.[104] The students called another meeting at St. Joseph's Church and decided to start a Freedom School. The school opened at St. Joseph's church on the following day under the direction of Dr. Karl Gregory, a Northern high school alumnus and Wayne State University professor.[105] Gregory was joined by "150 teachers, several of them Wayne State faculty members."[106] Several Northern teachers also joined the freedom school faculty. The board of education ordered the students back to school on April 20th. The students' decision to ignore the order polarized and caused a split within

---

[102] Fine, *Violence in the Model City,* 54

[103] Letter from student protest leaders in the Northern High School boycott 1966, letter dated April 15, 1966 found in Remus Robinson Papers box#12 Folder# 32 entitled Northern High School Incident, Walter P. Reuther Library

[104] Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 54

[105] Fine, *Violence in the Model City,* 54

[106] Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 54

Detroit's civil rights community. [107] Rev. Cleage and a student group supported prolonging the strike, while the "NAACP and the White establishment however advised the students to return to school and attacked the quality of the education provided by the Freedom Schools."[108] Finally, on "April 26, the Northern students voted to return to school."[109]

Although the Northern boycott lasted only 19 days, its implications were far reaching. The students effectively expressed their concerns over the inferior quality of the education they were receiving. This was nothing new. A 1962 report presented to the Detroit Board of Education by the Committee on Equal Education Opportunities, found that the Detroit public schools were failing African-American children.[110] A similar report presented by the NAACP in 1965 indicated that not one advanced placement test was given at the predominantly Black Central, Northern, Northeastern, and Northwestern high schools during the 1963-64 school year. Only after the students took action did the board members respond and initiate the creation of a city-wide committee of community leaders, educators and politicians. The High School Study Commission began its deliberations in May 1966. The committee was comprised of 350 members and 22 study groups, one for each of Detroit's high schools. This committee was given the responsibility of examining the curriculum offerings of every school, the relationship between the schools and the central administration, personnel policies and practices of the board, relations between schools and the communities they served, and the overall plight of the

---

[107] Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 55

[108] Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 55

[109] Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 55

[110] Rev. Albert B. Rev. Cleage, City-Wide Citizen Action Committee News, *What Do We Owe Our Children* Presented to the Detroit Board of Education Reverend Albert Rev. Cleage June 13, 1967 Published in Citywide Citizens action committee Volume 1, No.1

district.[111] The Commission report was released in 1968 with Commission member Edward Cushman, declaring, "our schools are appallingly inadequate, a disgrace to the community and a tragedy for the thousands of young men and women whom we compel and cajole to sit in them."[112]

The efforts of the Northern student protestors also contributed fuel to the Black grassroots community. An article printed in the *Michigan Chronicle* in May 1966 revealed that "a Black grassroots worker commented that the poor quality of education available to Detroit Blacks would be the target of groups mobilizing to make the summer of 1967 long and hot."[113] The summer of 1967 in Detroit indeed would be "long and hot." By the middle of 1967, the civil rights movement was torn by the struggles between an older generation of integrationist and a younger, more militant generation of separatists.[114] Jeffrey Mirel said it became apparent to the new breed of militant leadership that the schools weren't effectively educating Detroit's African-American children, but was "fulfilling their fundamental mission, namely to mis-educate Black children."[115] The efforts of the students who organized the Northern student protest clearly exceeds Mirel's criteria in that they also presented issues with the quality of the existing education and created a freedom school to continue their education during the strike. It is also significant that the students' actions resulted in the creation of the High School Study Commission that prompted initiatives to bring about change within the Detroit public schools.

---

[111] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of An Urban School System*, 327
[112] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of An Urban School System*, 328
[113] *Michigan Chronicle*, May (date unknown)1966
[114] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of An Urban School System*, 309
[114] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of An Urban School System*, 308-09
[115] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of An Urban School System*, 308.

Mirel's second category suggests that the students were being motivated by the desire for symbols of Black Nationalism and culture is an understatement. While Mirel seems to make light of the desires of the students, a more accurate interpretation would be that their desires reflected key aspects of the Black Power movement that was at its height at the time. African Studies professor Kwasi Konadu provides a more accurate context explaining that the student's efforts "have its [their] roots in a longstanding Black Nationalist tradition, which took on the form of the Black Power and consciousness movement of the 1960s and 1970s and represented a broad and visionary socio-political movement and network." [116]

The Black Nationalist aspects of Detroit's student protesters were best exhibited in their demand for culturally-relevant education, the renaming of the schools they attended, and the request for the presence of culturally-relevant symbols in the schools. Mirel explains that the students not only called for "educational programs along Black nationalist lines" but also for "a community-control governing board, and Black studies curriculum that included Black history, literature, and political education." Furthermore, during the 1969 school year, students were involved in confrontations with the board that included demonstrations demanding the renaming of a junior high school and the right to fly the Black Nationalist flag.

Minutes from the Detroit School Board meeting on March 25, 1969 indicated that, "in December of 1968, some students from McMichael Junior High School requested, in writing and with petitions, that the board members change the name of McMichael to Malcolm X." The minutest show that no action was taken on the request until March 18, 1969 when the board "scheduled to meet with the representatives of the Afro-American Student Club." The club representatives arrived at the meeting with "a group of thirty to fifty people which also included

[116] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth*, 158.

their parents and sponsors." The board was willing to meet with the group, but limited participation in the proposed meeting to the organization's sponsor, eight student representatives and their parents. The students rejected the Board's offer and agreed to "meet with the Personnel Committee (of the Board) if the total group attended the meeting."[117] The board members repeated their willingness to meet with those select members of the group but the student organizations rejected the offer. Board member Stewart presented a resolution which reads:

That the Detroit Board of Education change the name of McMichael Junior High and that in the future this Board will respond, in like manner, to request where minorities have not been treated fairly or accurately by textbooks and where there is a need to improve self-concepts."[118] After an extensive discussion the vote on the amended motion failed. Although the students' efforts to change the school name, however, resulted in a resolution that required that in future instances, upon request, community members (i.e. parents and residents) could have input in the naming and renaming of the schools in their communities.

Mirel also indicated that "numerous conflicts between students and administrators in at least six schools also resulted from militants demanding the right to display the nationalist flag or from raising it in defiance of a 1969 school board ban on flying any flag other than the American."[119] In 1971, in the spirit of the students who walked out in 1969, the Northern High School students organized and protested again. Operating as the Black Student United Front of

---

[117] Minutes from Detroit Board of Education Meeting March 25, 1969, 546. Found in Walter Reuther Library

[118] Minutes from Detroit Board of Education Meeting March 25,1969, 547. Walter Reuther Library

[119] Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* 333.

Northern High School, the protesting students demanded the right to fly the Black Nationalist flag outside the school and to rename the school H. Rap Brown High School.[120]

The students also "called for a community-control governing board that would select new administrators that would decide on all matters relating to the school, a Black studies curriculum including Black history, literature and political education, the recognition of Black heroes through "pictures and artifacts," a restocking of the library with books "dealing with the Black experience and true Black history."[121] The demands presented by the Black Student United Front of Northern High School were indicative of the framing issues of the African-centered education movement.

The preceding examples illustrate the efforts of Detroit students and their supporters to obtain a new form of education. This new form of education commanded that it not only serve the needs of the Black community, but that it also is culturally-relevant. Although the student protest movement continued into the early 1970s, the CCSM gave way to decentralization. On April 14, 1969, State Senator Coleman A. Young (D-Detroit), leader of the Black delegation in Lansing, introduced decentralization legislation.[122] The bill authored by Young, protected some of the most important prerogatives of the central board and maintained the collective bargaining arrangements recently won the by the DFT. It was signed into law as Public Act 244, August 11, 1969.[123]

---

[120] Black Student United Front of Northern, "We Demand" a list of demands (leaflet, 1971) DPS/DCR papers, ser.2, box 8 folder 14. Walter Reuther Library

[121] Black Student United Front of Northern, "We Demand" a list of demands (leaflet, 1971) DPS/DCR papers, ser.2, box 8 folder 14. Walter Reuther Library

[122] Mirel, *the Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 353.

[123] Mirel, *the Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 337.

During the same year decentralization legislation was enacted in Lansing, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville group in New York withdrew their involvement in the CCSM in Brooklyn, New York. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville group struggled with the New York Board of Education for community control of schools for several years, finally relenting in 1969. Jitu Weusi, an African-American educator and key figure in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggle, emerged from that struggle to found the Uhuru Sasa School. "From 1960's on we were involved in the CCSM struggle," Weusi recalled. "And of course, it was the capitulation of that struggle in 1969 that led people like me to take the position that we did to develop schools outside the public school system in order to get the kind of control over the education of our children that we needed. So I left the public schools in November 1969 and established Uhuru Sasa School in 1970 as a means of trying to gain control over the education of our children."[124] The success of the Uhuru Sasa School inspired the creation of other independent schools in New York and in other east coast cities such as Trenton, N.J., Philadelphia, PA, and Washington D.C. As the independent school movement developed on the east coast, similar developments were occurring on the west coast and in the south.[125] In 1972, a collective of independent schools on the east coast met in Philadelphia where it was "agreed that it was time to form a national network."[126] The call was made for a national meeting. The call resulted in a national meeting of supporters of independent education. "The national meeting held at Penn Center in Frogmore, S.C., from June

[124] Heru Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence: An Afrocentric oral history of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1970—2000" (doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa), 43

[125] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 45.

[126] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 45.

29 through July 3, 1972. Attended by 65 Black educational activists representing 23 independent schools, this 6-day gathering gave birth to the Council of Independent Black Institutions."[127]

Educators Imani Humphrey and Malik Yakini, who were both active during the era of student protests, were key figures in the CIACEM. Humphrey, praised by Aldridge as being a "consciousness raiser" among her students, taught at King High School in the late 1960s. She was so impressed by the strides made by the CIBI member schools that she recruited parents and educators who shared her vision and two years later (1972), founded the Alexander Crummell School.

"I was bitten by this bug that we had to have a school," said Humphrey. The Alexander Crummell started out as a Saturday supplemental school but later became the Aisha Shule Affirmative School, the first totally independent African-centered school in Detroit and in the state of Michigan.

In 1989, Yakini co-founded Nsoroma Institute which became Detroit's second independent African-centered school established in Detroit. Yakini's activism began when he was a student at Post Junior High School in the late 1960s. "I was impacted by this whole idea of Black people rebelling in order to change conditions,"[128] he said during an interview.

Yakini was also driven by his appetite for learning more about the history of the people of the African Diaspora and his own struggle as a student to get the school system to see that they were included and more accurately portrayed in textbooks.[129]

In this chapter, I have pin-pointed the historical antecedents of the CIACEM in Detroit. The efforts of those African-Americans who founded Detroit's first Black owned and operated

---

[127] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 33.

[128] Malik Yakini, interview conducted by author, April 1, 2009

[129] Malik Yakini, interview conducted by author, April 1, 2009

schools during the 19th century along with the Universities of Islam and the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life during the early 20th century, serve as the earliest ideological antecedents to this movement. The later efforts of GOAL, the participants in the movement for Community Control of Schools, and the student protest movements, reflect a more advanced thrust in the direction towards African-centered education philosophy. Finally, the failure of CCSM and later decentralization resulted in the creation of independent schools that were not only culturally-relevant, but independent and also sought to meet the needs of the African-American community.

Chapter 2

The Independent Period 1970-1990

The independent period of the Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement (CIACEM), spans from 1970 until 1990. During this phase former advocates for community control of schools abandoned their efforts for control of existing public schools opting to establish independently owned and operated schools. The failure of school boards to satisfactorily relinquish control of education to local community members resulted in the creation of several independently owned and operated African-American schools around the United States. These emergent schools were strongly guided by the concept of cultural relevance and the ideology of Black Nationalism. These schools came to be known as Independent Black Institutions (IBIs) and were the pioneer schools of the CIACEM. From 1969 into the early 1970s, independent Black schools emerged in New York City, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Chicago and East Pala Alto, California.

This chapter will examine the formal inception of the Independent Black School Movement which evolved into the Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement. The chapter will examine the birth and evolution of the Uhuru Sasa School and the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) both of which served as models for subsequent Independent Black schools. The chapter also examines the birth and evolution of Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute as Detroit's first African-centered schools, and their accompanying philosophies at their inception.

As these independent Black institutions proliferated, the founders of these schools realized the need to formulate operational unity and formed the CIBI. Uhuru Sasa and the founding institutional members of the CIBI serve as the ideological, philosophical and

organizational model for the subsequent schools that emerged within the movement. The importance of both institutions is resonate in assertions made by African-centered educator Dr. Kofi Lomotey and Duquesne University professor Dr. Heru Hotep. Lomotey explained "the institution [Uhuru Sasa] provided an inspiration for literally thousands of Africans around the country, and even in the Caribbean, and maybe to a lesser extent in Africa. That was the flagship in terms of what we could do in (the area) of independent education."[130] Hotep asserted that CIBI is the largest professional association of Pan African nationalist educators in the country and the first practitioners (more than 30 years) of the African-centered approach to education currently revitalizing urban schools.[131]

Inspired by the efforts of those who established the Uhuru Sasa School and the organizers of CIBI, Detroit entered the CIACEM during this period. Detroit's entrance into the movement was marked by the founding of the Alexander Crummell Affirmative School/Aisha Shule in 1974 (the state's first African-centered school), which later came to be known as The Aisha Shule School for Gifted Children and the subsequent emergence of Nsoroma Institute in 1989. This chapter will examine the birth, evolution and structure of Uhuru Sasa Shule, CIBI, Aisha Shule, and the Nsoroma Institute.

Uhuru Sasa Shule

The Uhuru Sasa Shule is one of the earliest founded African-centered schools and was founded by "Baba" Jitu Weusi as a result of his frustration with the CCSM. Uhuru Sasa Shule emerged out of the African-American Students Association (ASA) which was formed during the

[130] Kofi Lomotey Interview conducted by Kwasi Konadu: June 19, 1998. Brooklyn, N.Y.
[131] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," p.iii

fall of 1967 as part of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville group in Brooklyn, N.Y.[132] Weusi explained that after withdrawing from the CCSM by the summer of 1969, "there was a group of students in the ASA, I guess you could say a little hard core group, who kept saying let's get our own institution, let's do our own thing and in the summer of that year, we made a deal with this landlord, Mr. Kaplin, who was the owner of 10 Claver place and signed a lease for the rental of the building for two years with an option to buy."[133] After spending the summer of 1969 clearing the building of debris and redecorating, Weusi and his student group established a new headquarters for the African-American Student Association and created a musical performance venue known as *The East*. Along with musical performances, *The East* originally called the *Black Experience in Sound,* also hosted poetry, artworks, dance, dramatic plays, drumming and lecture presentations. The presenters included the late Kwame Ture, Sundiata Acoli and H. Rap Brown. People from various segments of the African-American community were attracted to the music and dramatic presentations as well as the cultural and political educational activities that took place at *The East.* By December 31, 1969, *The East* opened as a cultural center[134] that housed a music venue, bookstore, food co-op, restaurant, clothing store and Uhuru Sasa Shule, the independent Black school. *The East* was the parent organization of the Uhuru Sasa School which emerged as the primary educational component of the *East* by February 1970.

Uhuru Sasa began "with about 40 high school students, most of who had been members of ASA and had been suspended or expelled from public schools for various infractions the initial focus was to assist the students in obtaining their high school diplomas and admission into

---

[132] Jitu Weusi Interview conducted by Kwasi Konadu July 25, 1998, P. 12

[133] Jitu Weusi Interview conducted by Kwasi Konadu Part. II conducted on August 1, 1998, P.4

[134] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth*, 3.

college."[135] The effort toward high school students generated interest in parents with younger children. By April 1970, the school opened its elementary division with 20 children which became the Uhuru Sasa Elementary School, according to Weusi After organizing with a couple of day care teachers, the Uhuru Sasa Preschool was established in July. "By September 1970, we had three divisions operating under the Uhuru Sasa banner," Weusi said. We had a preschool, which was for youngsters from two to five; the elementary school for youngsters six to 13 and the high school for youngsters 14 to 17."[136] Uhuru Sasa's mission was the development of skills and thinking necessary for nationhood and liberation from the dominant political and cultural thought and behaviors.[137]

The school was operated by a headmaster who was responsible for the daily supervision of the school; however his activities were under the direct supervision of the parent council.[138] There was also a policy making body which included student, parental, and teacher representation. This council primarily focused on fundraising, complaints about teachers, delinquent tuition payments, budgeting and curriculum.[139] Parents played a major role in the operation of the school and were involved in major decision at every level. Teachers were also held to a high level of accountability. There was less emphasis placed on educational credentials, with greater emphasis on "dedication and ability to learn and teach in an African-centered environment and through the corresponding approaches to learning and teaching"

---

[135] Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence, 44.*
[136] Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence,* 45.
[137] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again*, 56.
[138] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again*, 56.
[139] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again*, 56.

teachers were expected to "commit themselves to the shule's (school's) philosophy of nation building and self-reliance."[140]

Uhuru Sasa was clearly established as an independent school which meant that its funding primarily came from the African-American community. Its primary source of revenue was tuition; however the institution was inclusive in that it provided options for community members that were economically challenged. Parents were expected to contribute to the school either through tuition or the provision of services. Those families that could not afford to pay the cost of tuition donated (their work) to the school, and both students and teachers maintained the facility thus consolidating resources by not needing to hire a maintenance staff.[141] The financial needs of the school were otherwise offset by revenue generated from the other institutions or enterprises of *The East*, in addition to the cultural and political fundraisers.[142] In addition to the three educational divisions of the Uhuru Sasa Shule were two pre-school educational components; the Imani Child Development Center, and the Imani Child Development Extension.

The Council of Independent Black Institutions

The organizational impetus for the African-centered school movement can be traced to a number of conferences and meetings that facilitated the early development of independent African-American educational institutions. These gatherings occurred over a four year period and were conducted by several organizations. The earliest of these was the formation of the National Association of African-American Education (NAAAE) which was established under the

[140] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again*, 57.
[141] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again*, 57.
[142] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again*, 54.

leadership of Preston Wilcox.[143] Their first meeting was held in Chicago, Illinois in June 1968, in this meeting the organizers engaged issues such as "higher education, blackening of the curriculum, Black educators, Black students, school and black community [and] materials of instruction. The NAAAE met again in August 1968 in St. Louis, it followed through on the above themes but in the context of nation building."[144] The second of these meetings was a workshop on the Independent Black Institutions (IBIs) held in East Palo Alto, California August 17-19, 1970.[145] This workshop was organized by the California Association for Afro-American Education (CAAAE) and the Nairobi College. The meeting was attended by more than fifty people representing twenty Independent Black Institutions (IBIs).[146] Frank Satterwhite's manual *Planning an Independent Black Educational Institution* identifies the three-fold purpose of the workshop: to review and analyze developing models for the IBI; set up a functional network for communication purposes; and develop a working plan for establishing a nationwide system of IBIs.[147]

The Nairobi Workshop produced a report that further indicated that the existing IBIs' objectives were to fulfill the needs of Afrikan people; to halt the process of genocide; to teach our history and culture, and develop an awareness of our contemporary environmental context, and to train for nation-building; to create a new type of individual capable of building new social

---

143 Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again*, 54.

144 Preston Wilcox (1970) "Education for Black Humanism: A Way of Approaching It." In Nathan Wright (ED), *What Black Educators are Saying.* NY: Hawthorn Books Inc., p.9

145 Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth*, 54

146 Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth*, 54

147 Satterwhite, Frank J. (1971) *Planning an Independent Black Educational Institution*. NY: Moja Publishing House, LTD, p.5

institutions; and to create an Afrikan personality embodied in a new Afrikan man.[148] During this workshop the minimum characteristics for membership were established, these included: that Black people be in exclusive control of the decision making process; that financial resources be obtained from any source, but all funds must be received on terms defined by the institutions and in addition the primary emphasis must be placed upon developing financial resources from black people; that the institution must subscribe to the ideology of Pan-Afrikanism and Black Nationalism; that all staff are required to be of Afrikan heritage; and that institutional activities must be directed toward serving the needs of Black people.[149]

The next in these series of workshops was held as part of the fifth Black Power Conference hosted by the Congress of Afrikan People (CAP) and convened in Atlanta, GA, September 3-7, 1970.[150] A workshop on education was one of 11 workshops conducted. The education workshop was organized in eight divisions, one of which was IBIs. The four consistent themes through all the divisions of the education workshop were that all Black educators should be held accountable to the Black community, the education of Black people should be controlled by Black people; education is a political act and its goals are people building, community building, and nation building; and there is a need to define what is meant by Black controlled institutions.[151] The IBIs division recommended that efforts should be made to; to establish a nationwide system of IBIs; to hook up with IBIs which emerged from the Nairobi Workshop; and to write a manual on "How to set up an Independent Black Educational

---

148 Satterwhite, *Planning an Independent Black Educational Institution,* 14.

149 Satterwhite, *Planning an Independent Black Educational Institution,* 5-6.

150 Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth,* P. 54

151 Imamu Amiri Baraka, ed., *Pan African Congress- A Documentary of the First Modern Pan African Congress,* 351-52.

Institution."[152] It was during this conference that philosophical issues regarding public versus private education emerged. There were two schools of thought. One wanted to continue to pursue community control of public schools (arguing that most of African children were in public schools) while the other wanted to either establish new IBIs or strengthen the existing ones. The former strategy received the most attention.[153] Although the strategy to establish and strengthen new IBIs prevailed, the diverging approaches to educating African-American children would re-emerge later as the movement developed.

The next gathering that contributed to the development of CIBI was a convention for Black teachers held in New York city in April 1972 and hosted by the African-American Teachers Association, one of the vanguard organizations in the CCSM.[154] The convention served a two-fold purpose to establish a school controlled by the ATA; to concretize a strategy and plan of action.[155] Out of this meeting came a proposal that a Council of Independent Black Institutions should be created.[156] Following the convention there was a meeting convened under the direction of Baba Jitu Weusi on April 23, 1972. This meeting was attended by representatives of several independent Black schools located in the Philadelphia and New York City areas who gathered to discuss the need to pool resources and ideas. During May of the same year a planning session was held in Philadelphia, Pa. The planning session led to the

---

[152] Baraka, *African Congress- A Documentary of the First Modern Pan African Congress*, 352.

[153] Shujaa, Mwalimu J., Afrik, Hanibal T. (1996). "School Desegregation the Politics of Culture, and the Council of Independent Black Institutions." In Mwalimu J. Shujaa (Ed.), Beyond Segregation: *The Politics of Quality in African-American Education.* Thousand Hills CA: Corwin Press, Inc., p. 258

[154] Konadu, *True Crushed to the Earth*, 55.

[155] Konadu, *True Crushed to the Earth*, 55.

[156] Shujaa & Afrik (1996), op. cit., p. 25; Doughty, James (1973), op. cit., p.93

founding meeting of the CIBI which took place in Frogmore, South Carolina from June 29 to July 3, 1972.[157]

During the founding meeting of CIBI there were five goals established for the new organization: to make CIBI the political vehicle through which a qualitatively different people is produced; to establish a reputation for CIBI as being dedicated to excellence; to charge CIBI with the responsibility of developing the moral character of its students, parents, and staff; to establish CIBI as a source of well-reasoned leadership in the struggle for freedom and internal community development; and to have within CIBI the structural capability to act upon our continuing responsibility to the majority of our children who are still in the public schools.[158] Weusi explained "Our principal objective was to form a working group around the issue of independent Black education, and give support to our schools, as well as to provide incentives for other communities to start independent institutions."[159] The CIBI's approach to educating African-American children positions the independent Black institution as a vehicle for community development. CIBI's commitment to the development of its students, staff, family and broader community are illustrated in by the four domains which frame the CIBI's programs: Ideological/Philosophical, Black Curriculum Development and Implementation, Parental Involvement and Development, and Community Development.

Ideology/ Philosophy

---

[157] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to Earth*, 55.

[158] Council of Independent Black Institutions, "Summary From the First Working Meeting," Brooklyn, New York, 1972 p.1 (Mimeographed). In Doughty, A Historical Analysis of Black Education, P.94

[159] Hotep, *Dedicated To Excellence*, 51.

In James Doughty's dissertation, A *Historical Analysis of Black Education Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement*, he provides an ideological and philosophical perspective of the early movement. He declared that CIBI members embraced a common ideology that serves as a unifying force and that the ideology is based on an understanding of and commitment to practice Kawaida, Black Nationalism, Black Power, and Pan Afrikanism.

Kawaida –a dynamic Black ideology of change synthesizing the significant Black thought of the late 50s and 60s designed for Afrikans in America and teaches that they have a special role to fulfill in the struggle of oppressed people.

Black Power--an essential part of the ideology of the Black school indicated that one should not beg for that which one has the power to take. Black Power is comprised of four ends self-determination, self-sufficiency, self- respect, and self-defense.

Black Nationalism--the ideology that advocates for a people making their own nation, a race or people distinct and separate from others in social, cultural, and political matters. The idea that Black people ought to possess a country.

Pan Afrikanism-the highest political expression of Black Power. It states that Afrikan people must govern themselves, that all Black people are Afrikan, and bound together racially, historically, culturally, politically, and emotionally.[160]

In addition to an ideological framework Doughty identified several key attributes of the independent Black school; communalism- a set of human relationship based upon cooperativeness, cohesiveness and concern for Afrikan peoples transcending self, decolonization-the acquisition of ownership and control by Afrikan people of the political,

[160] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," P.97.

economic, social, and educational institutions which are rightfully their own. The Afrikan personality - a set of attitudes, values and behaviors which are necessary for the development, maintenance and perpetuation of Afrikan peoples throughout the world. Humanism--an attitudinal and behavioral perspective which stresses distinctively human rather than material and profit concerns. Harmony - which stresses a functional congruency between man and his environment. Nation-building--the process of involving human and material resources for community development, service, ownership, and control. Furthermore, independence was also an essential quality of the framework out of which the CIACEM emerged.

Black Curriculum Development and Implementation

Curriculum development calls for a definition of the salient features of a Black curriculum as a vehicle which brings together all participants- learner, Mwalimu [teachers], community into personal contact and meaningful involvement with the realities of our past, the needs of our present and the aspirations of our future.[161] A Black curriculum must include curriculum that is flexible and geared to the unique needs and life situations of Afrikan people, culture, values, community, nation and race. This curriculum is appropriately pre-packaged, scheduled and uniform throughout an Afrikan school system. It is symbol based in order to perpetuate and distribute through verbal symbols, recordings, still pictures and motion pictures the uniqueness of the Afrikan experience.[162]

Black curriculum is experience based in order to insure the internalization of curricular experiences. The curriculum shall provide a small step, sequenced skill development program. Black curriculum reveals, analyzes, and prescribes a course of action based on our past, yet

[161] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 126.
[162] Doughty, " A Historical Analysis of Black Education" 126

taking into account our present predicament and motivates for the goals of the future. The Black curriculum examines the

who, what, when, where, how and why of all questions. It receives its substance from our ideological stance and yet is academically oriented. Black curriculum must identify, expose, and confront reality. Finally Black curriculum requires sufficient concentration in the cognitive, effective, affective and psycho-motor domains.[163]

Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition

Parental involvement and development was a very important aspect of the African-centered Education Movement at its' inception. Parents within the independent school were considered to be the foundation of the institution and expected to accept full responsibility and authority for the success or failure of all that is undertaken by the institutions. Parents assumed the responsibility of Mwalimu, directors, custodians, fund-raisers, evaluators, curriculum developers, program developers, legal advisor, public relations consultant, and treasurer and/or secretary.[164] Parents were involved in every role essential to the operation and maintenance of the independent Black school.

As part of the independent Black school, parents served on the parent council which was a legal, structured organization of Afrikan people who are dedicated to building, maintaining, improving, and expanding the institution.[165] The objectives and goals of the Parent Council was to support and strengthen the program so the institution could be built to maintain and serve diversity of educational, political, economic, and cultural, social, and spiritual needs of the Black

[163] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 126
[164] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 200
[165] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 202

community in which the program is located and advance the struggle for Black liberation wherever Afrikan people have settled in the world.[166] Their objectives included; fundraising, the implementation of programs that promoted growth and development of all parents associated with the school, motivation of all participants to comply with the policies and resolution of conflicts, the development of the best possible curriculum for the students, the creation of a means to evaluate the curriculum, and to make all person aware of the laws and requirements associated with all phases of the program.

Parental development was also an essential aspect of parental involvement. Parents were expected to be dedicated, mature, responsible, and committed persons who were struggling to achieve the four ends of Black Power: self-determination, self-defense, self-sufficiency, and self-respect. They were expected to be open to re-education, and to assume the responsibility to create a future for his/her family that provides direction, inspiration and discipline necessary to attain that future. Parents were also expected to be committed to the strengthening of the Black family structure and thereby create communities that are built upon faith, trust, respect, discipline, love, communalism, and political control. Parents include all adult community members that were willing to assume responsibility for its children, and to create a home environment that reinforces and strengthens our nation since the home and family is the smallest unit of the nation.[167]

Community Development

Building communities was also an essential aspect of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI). While the member institutions were comprised of independent Black schools,

[166] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 202
[167] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 200

the target of the programs and services were not limited to the students of those schools. The Independent Black School Movement sought to serve and re-educate their entire communities its members included but were not limited to, Black religious leaders, educators, political movers, social groups, economic interests, the media and indigenous Blacks. CIBI also defined the community as "a group of Afrikan people who embrace a common ideology, culture and historical heritage… share a similar commitment to build and strengthen the institution, perceive themselves as distinct in many respects from the larger society, possess a strong allegiance to their own ethnic group, organizes for its own protection and promotion of its interest, and practices joint possession of goods and acceptance of liability."[168] The Independent Black schools are vehicles for substantive changes in Black neighborhoods that affect the educational, political, economic, social, housing, legal defense, imprisonment, communication, and self-defense areas of Black life.

The following section will address the historical evolution of the CIBI from 1970 until 2000. During this 28 year period, the CIBI operated under the direction of four National Executive Officers (NEO), Jitu Weusi (1972-76), Kofi Lomotey (1976-1987), Naima Olugbala (1987-1990) and Mwalimu Shujaa (1990-2000). Interviews of the four NEOs conducted by Duquesne University Professor Dr. Heru Hotep provide much of the information about this period.

Baba Jitu Weusi (1972-1976)

Baba Jitu Weusi was the first NEO of the CIBI and the link between the Community Control of Schools Movement (CCSM) and the Independent Black School Movement/CIACEM. Weusi was dissatisfied with the results of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggle. "From the 1960s

[168] Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education," 209.

on we were involved in the community control struggle," Weusi said. "And of course, it was the capitulation of that struggle in 1969 that led people like me to take the position that we did to develop schools outside the public school system in order to get the kind of control over the education of our children that we needed. So I left the schools in November 1969 and established Uhuru Sasa in 1970 as a means of trying to gain control over the education of our children."[169]

Uhuru Sasa was the educational component of the Black Nationalist enterprise known as the East, which was in Brooklyn, NY. *The East* and Uhuru Sasa served as models of IBIs for CIBI. Weusi said there were those who thought "no one in CIBI had the resources to run the organization other that Uhuru Sasa and *The East*, and that Uhuru Sasa and The East were the strongest structures in CIBI."[170] Uhuru Sasa's strong position and Weusi's role as head-master, facilitated his appointment as the first NEO. The accomplishments that occurred during his tenure included establishment of the CIBI Teacher Training Institute (TTI), a speakers bureau; a national newsletter *Fundisha Teach*, and a promotional movie , *It's a New Day*. Weusi attributes the documentary and the TTI as key factors in the organization's growth.

Weusi said that during the early years of the organization, "formal credentials were less relevant and in most instances, were considered a hindrance to the schools' purpose. The skills and commitment a person brought to the school were more appreciated."[171] The first TTI, conducted in April 1970 was designed by John Churchville, director of the Freedom Library Day

---

169 Jitu Weusi Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 43.

170 Jitu Weusi, interview conducted by Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 150.

171 Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth*, 63.

School of Philadelphia. The aim of TTI was "to develop highly skilled, sensitive and politicized Afrikan teachers."[172]

The training topics were classroom instruction, African child development, protocol and discipline, historiography, interdisciplinary cognitive skills, curricula design, administration and parent education.[173] The teaching strategies focused on ideology, methodology, and subject matter intended to merge the various aspects into lesson plans. Emphasis was placed on discipline, character and total concentration on the assigned task.[174] The TTI, currently known as the Walimu Development Institute , operated throughout the life span of the CIBI but its implementation and themes varied, reflective of the times and administrations.

The publication of *Fundisha Teach* (teachers teach), the semi-annual internal newsletter was first published in 1974. The newsletter is the second accomplishment to occur under Weusi's administration but was initiated by Kofi Lomotey, the second NEO of the CIBI. *Fundisha Teach* was a vehicle to communicate activities, events and ideas, among CIBI schools.[175] The newsletter is still published and currently provides a forum for curriculum innovations, book reviews, news about member schools and matters pertaining to people of Afrikan ancestry.[176]

The CIBI Speakers Bureau was founded in 1974 by African centered education pioneers John Churchville, Mary Hoover, and Frank Satterwhite. The Speaker's Bureau and is currently

---

[172] *Black News* (1975) "CIBI Perfects Technique for Teacher Training Institute" *Black News*, 3 (3):6

[173] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth*, 64.

[174] Konadu, *Truth Crushed to the Earth*, 64.

[175] Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 55.

[176] Council of independent Black Institutions website CIBI.org

listed on CIBI's website. At this writing, no details were listed on the website regarding its purpose or function.

The promotional movie, *It's a New Day,* was a 30-minute, black and white documentary about CIBI schools in progress.[177] The movie was shot at Uhuru Sasa (Brooklyn, NY), Freedom Library Day School (Philadelphia, PA), and Umoja Sasa Shule (Columbus OH) and was organized in three, 10-minute segments for each school. It was partially funded by a grant from an undisclosed church foundation. Weusi said that shortly after the release of the documentary, small independent black educational institutions, started to emerge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Detroit, Michigan, St. Louis, MO and other cities.[178]

Baba Kofi Lomotey (1976-1987)

Baba Kofi Lomotey succeeded Baba Jitu Weusi in 1976 and served as NEO for 11 years. He is the co-founder of the Shule ya Kujitambua (Re-identification) School in Oberlin, OH (1973) and Shule ya Taifa (Nation School) in East Palo Alto, CA (1979).[179] He currently serves as the CIBI secretary. Lomotey's main accomplishments were overseeing the implementation of the CIBI Science Fairs, survival camps, three publications, educational tours, and creation of the CIBI pledge.

CIBI's first annual Science Fair was held in April 1977. Lomotey said that the idea "grew out of the interest of the teachers who were at the Teacher Training Institute in Chicago in 1976."[180] The cultural component of the science fair, gave students opportunities to showcase

---

[177] Jitu Weusi, Interview conducted by Heru Hotep,*Dedicated to Excellence*, 56.
[178] Jitu Weusi, interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 58.
[179] Jitu Weusi, interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 73.
[180] Jitu Weusi, interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 89.

their talent in dancing , singing, poetry and other artistic skills."[181] The Science Fair was the first national science fair that was judged from an African-centered perspective rather than a wholly competitive one.[182] Projects were judged based on the students' ability to meet the criteria of the Nguzo Saba. The overarching question posed to the students was how their work met the needs and solved problems faced by people of African descent. The Science Fair attracted students, families and staff from schools around the nation.

The Survival Training Encampment which began in 1978, was conceived by CIBI's National Survival Training Committee the previous year.[183] The training which focuses on survival and self-defense, is typically held in the wilderness but during the Lomotey tenure the camps were conducted at locations close to CIBI schools.

Lomotey published his book *Nation Building in the African Community,* while he was NEO. Other books published during his administration were, *Should Television be the Primary Educator of Our Children, b*y Niani Kilkenny and *Education for Self Reliance: Idealism to Reality*, by Hanibal Afrik. The books were published in 1979 and 1981 and funded by a grant from the National Black United Fund.[184]

Two educational tours to Africa and one to China took place while Lomotey was NEO. He said the trip to China was an "educational tour to find out what we could do about their

[181] Jitu Weusi, Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence,* 89.
[182] Jitu Weusi, Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 90.
[183] Jitu Weusi, Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 90.
[184] Jitu Weusi, Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 91.

educational system and to share with them information about what we were trying to do here in the U.S., particularly in the African community."[185]

Lomotey explained that the educational tours to Africa began in 1978, but provided no date for the second tour. The majority of the time during the tours was spent visiting educational institutions, attending university lectures, visiting villages and neighboring countries where they learned about community life. The CIBI Pledge was written by Lomotey and Baba Hanibal Afrik and adopted in 1990 "It speaks to the whole notion of nationalism and the development of independent institutions,"[186] he said. The pledge became a required part of each CIBI school's daily ritual.

Mama Naima Olugbala (1987-1990)

Mama Naima Olugbala was the first woman to direct the CIBI and her tenure was the shortest. She is founder of the Omowale Shule in Pasadena, CA. Organizational matters within the CIBI were the main focus of her administration. Her accomplishments included establishing a closer connection between CIBI and its member schools; implementation of a member school cataloguing system and completion of CIBI's most important book, *Positive Afrikan Images for Children: Social Studies Curriculum*. The CIBI was restructured regionally and the Science Fair was also restructured under her administration.

"At the time I took the position, we were trying to bridge the gap between the CIBI as an organization and the independent schools," she said. Olugbala initiated a letter writing campaign with the objective of establishing a regular connection with member schools. She was also

[185] Jitu Weusi, Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 76.
[186] Jitu Weusi, Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, *Dedicated to Excellence*, 84.

instrumental in establishing a cataloguing system to keep track of the schools and students, personnel and histories. The system is still in place.[187]

Baba Mwalimu Shujaa (1990-2000)

Baba Shujaa is the last of the CIBI administrators within the scope of this study. Shujaa was co-founder and administrator of African People's Action School (ca.1976) in Trenton, NJ and the Nile Valley Shule (ca.1991) in Buffalo, NY.[188] Accomplishments during Shujaa's administration included establishment of CIBI's first biennial conference, publication of CIBI's definition of Afrikan-centered education and its *Standards for Evaluating Afrikan Centered Educational Institutions*, the establishment of their official website CIBI.org, and production of an updated color version of CIBI's promotional documentary, *It's a New Day.* Three significant events occurred while Shujaa was NEO. There was a shift in the profile of parents attracted to CIBI schools, and the transition of several member schools from independent and private to charter and public. There was also the realization for the intergenerational transference of power and leadership within the organization.

One of Shujaa's major goals was to shift the focus of the membership from the institutions and their leaders to the family members who were part of CIBI. "What I saw was that the school families, which were really the heart of the institutions, didn't know much of anything about CIBI because information about us never got beyond the school directors," Shujaa said. He said that he changed the membership structure so that families of the students would become members of CIBI.[189]

---

[187] Naima Olubala, interview conducted by Heru Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 115.
[188] Jitu Weusi Interview conducted by Heru Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 136.
[189] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 136.

As NEO, Shujaa contributed to the development of CIBI's first biennial convention which was part of the organization's 20th anniversary celebration. The first convention was held in 1992 at Howard University in Washington, D.C. The convention, which took place at the Howard Inn, was a major success, according to Shujaa. It "brought people together and it got my early years as the National Executive Officer off to a good start". The convention also "made people believe that the approach that

I was advocating in terms of membership was a viable strategy because up to that point we had not had an activity of that magnitude that worked as well as it did."[190] The biennial convention was held consistently from 1992 through 2000.

While Shujaa was NEO, he got the CIBI leadership body to consider clarifying the definition of African-centered education. "One of the first things I did as NEO was to raise the question: What is African-centered education? Everybody was doing something different. So coming together and hammering out what we consider to be a CIBI definition of African-centered education was an institutional milestone."[191] The ambiguity reflected in Shujaa's words is also thought to have led to the development of the *Standards for Evaluating an Afrikan Centered Educational Institution.* "We put emphasis on an accreditation process with focus on improving the quality of our institutions," Shujaa said. "It is basically a traditional model for accreditation. What we put together was a process where teams from three institutions would serve as consultants to help other institutions evaluate themselves. The team's role would be to help generate ideas and suggestions for developing action plans for addressing any areas of

[190] Hotep, "Dedicated To Excellence," 137.
[191] Hotep, "Dedicated To Excellence," 146.

improvement that the organization might want to focus upon.[192] The standards that we developed to assess our practice, I believe are being challenged at this very moment."[193]

The CIBI's official website (www.cibi.org) was established while Shujaa was NEO and the documentary *It's a New Day,* was updated and reissued as a promotional video. Hotep asserts that during the Shujaa administration there was a "demographic shift characterizing the ideological perspectives of CIBI school parents."[194] The initial perspective resonates in Shujaa's assertion that "in the beginning we [CIBI] started as Pan African Nationalist. Our goal was national sovereignty and our objective was to build a nation. That part is being lost."[195] Hotep attributed this loss to "the politically conservative climate of the late 1980s and 1990s which brought parents to CIBI schools who neither want to be identified as Pan African nationalist nor respect the African-centered cultural base that make CIBI students successful learners".[196] Shujaa further suggested that the new families were not coming because they share a belief in what the school represents. "They're coming because they think that academically their children will do better, not because they respect the cultural orientation that is making it possible for their children to excel. They bring a public school attitude."[197]

During the Shujaa administration the need for the intergenerational transference of power was realized. "The major focus has been on keeping our institutions alive, and as folks age, the

---

[192] Hotep, "Dedicated To Excellence," 145.
[193] Hotep, "Dedicated To Excellence,"146.
[194] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 159.
[195] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence." 153.
[196] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence" 159.
[197] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 153.

question is: Who's going to take our institutions through the next generation?"[198] Shujaa reported, "A process to guide this intergenerational transference of CIBI's institutional power and authority is underway." During the 1998 convention, Shujaa requested individuals interested in becoming CIBI leaders to come to the podium and share their back ground with the assembled membership."[199] Twenty people responded to the call and became the Name Ya Ita (war council). By 2000, CIBI fulfilled the need for new and youthful leadership by appointing a young male and female as co-executive officers. This new model of leadership was innovative in that it departed from the single gender model and emphasized the African concept of balance which is manifested in the complimentary attributes of the male and female. This answered the need for leadership of a new generation and was indicative of the implementation of a new leadership model within the organization. Perhaps the most provocative development during the Shujaa administration was the creation of, and in a few cases the conversion to, state-funded charter schools by CIBI member institutions.[200] The CIBI member schools that converted to charter schools include Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy and Nsoroma Institute. Two African-centered charter schools--Sankofa Shule in East Lansing, MI and Timbuctu Academy of Science and Technology in Detroit, Michigan were allowed to become members in CIBI. Shujaa described the period in which charter schools emerged within the organization as "a period of crisis because we are not moving forward."[201] The presence of charter schools presented ideological challenges within the organization that resulted in a five-year period of debate and the departure of several formerly independent schools from the

[198] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 153.
[199] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 159.
[200] Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence," 159.
[201] Hotep, "Dedicated To Excellence," 167.

organization. The impact and emergence of African-centered charter schools will be addressed in a later chapter. In the preceding sections of this chapter we have examined the inception and evolution of the Uhuru Sasa Shule and the Council of Independent Black Institutions. These institutions were not only instrumental in the development of the CIACEM; they influenced the birth and evolution of Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute, Detroit's first independent African-centered schools.

The Aisha Shule School

Chapter 1 of this work examines local Detroiters that were instrumental in educational developments that paved the way for the implementation of African-centered education philosophy in Detroit schools. However, it was not until 1974 that Detroit formally entered the Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement. The birth of the Alexander Crummell Affirmative School delineates Detroit's entrance into the CIACEM. The remaining section of this chapter shall examine the birth, evolution, and structure of the Aisha Shule School and Nsoroma Institute.

Aisha Shule School was founded in 1974 as the first African-centered school in the city of Detroit and state of Michigan. The three organizations that were essential to the founding and early implementation of the Aisha Shule School were Black Women Aware (BWA), Umoja Abegunde and the Alexander Crummell Center for Worship and Learning.

BWA was a group of friends that who were being politicized in the 70's and "had little gatherings where we discussed things happening and where we could help,"[202] according to "Mama Imani" Humphrey one the group's co-founders. The other friends were Enymoyi Hill, Thelma Curtis, Malkia Brantuo and Tiana Deonstor. Humphrey said that the group did not have

[202] Imani Humphrey, interview conducted by author August 5, 2009.

a name until after they attended the National Black Convention held from March 10-12, 1972, in Gary, IN. When they returned to Detroit, they decided they needed to be organized to be more effective. Humphrey said that at Tiana Deonstor's suggestion, they took the name Black Women Aware, because they were "Black women aware." BWA took on voter's rights and election issues, collaborated with the Shrine of the Black Madonna on political issues and also became involved with the migrant African community in Detroit. The group also established the Nia House whose purpose was to uplift young Black women. They provided clothing, food, counseling, medical care and other services to misguided African-American women.[203] BWA eventually included family members and expanded into an African-American family collective known as Umoja Abegunde (UA).

Umoja Abegunda, which had as many as 12 families, collectively celebrated their first Kwanza celebration in 1971, according to Humphrey. It was during the following year, 1972, that African-Americans in Detroit made the effort to implement African- centered education in the city. Humphrey said that her son and some of his friends who were college students and members of the Congress of African People (CAP) started a supplementary school program called Ujima which operated after school and during the summer. The school was housed in the Alexander Crummell Center for Worship and Learning. The college students were zealous but inexperienced. They asked Humphrey and her sister Malkia Brantuo who were both professional educators, to train them. After operating for two years, the school folded in 1974. Later that year, the Alexander Crummell Affirmative School (the first incarnation of Aisha Shule) was founded. The school emerged as the academic entity of Alexander Crummell Center for

[203] Razia Curtis, interview conducted by the author July, 2208.

Worship and Learning (ACCWL). ACCWL was a multifaceted cultural and service center with a spiritual base.[204]

ACCWL was established as an alternative church under the auspices of the Episcopal Church. The founding members were listed on a legal Notice of Application to Establish Mission. The signees were Richard Humphrey, Barbara Hill, Malkia Frazier, Rev. Author Williams, Dr. Roland W. Higgs and Anne Holyfield, Pauletta Powell, Rev. Anthony A. Thornell, Thelma Curtis, Shirley Donastong, Joyce Hill and William A. Curtis.[205]

The center emphasized "three developmental phases . . .the establishment of a worship community of love, task forces that teach, and the building of community programs."[206] Humphrey said that the idea for the school came about as a result of her combined efforts with those of Episcopal Bishop Anthony "Kwasi" Thornell, the presiding minister and director of the center. Humphrey said that "I had wanted to start a school for several years." They combined their resources to establish the Alexander Crummell Affirmative School.[207] The Alexander Crummell Affirmative School began as a Saturday supplementary school. The school was a collective effort of the members of Humphrey's group UA, and Thornell. Razia Curtis, a parent and co-founder, said "there was some motivation to develop a school that would address some of

---

[204] Imani Humphrey interview conducted by author August 5, 2009

[205] Letter from the Law Offices of the Lewis, White, Lee, Clay, & Graves from attorney White addressed to the Rt. Reverend Coleman McGhee Jr., Bishop of the Episcopal Church Diocese of Michigan. Bentley Historical Library Collection, University of Michigan, Episcopal Church, and Diocese of Michigan Collection box 37, Highland Park Alexander Crummell Center Folder.

[206] Alexander Crummell Center Brochure, Undated found in Bentley Collection Library, University of Michigan, Episcopal Church, Diocese of Michigan, Box # 37 Highland Park Alexander Crummell Center Folder.

[207] Imani Humphrey interview conducted by author August 5, 2009

the real needs of our children"[208] Her words were echoed by co-founder Gloria House. "From the beginning we wanted our children to have an African-centered orientation, to know who they were, to be grounded in their own history and to have skills that would allow them to move in the direction of whatever they wanted to do."[209] Humphrey said they were also inspired by the efforts of other Black Nationalist who established schools based on ideas which emerged out of the movement of the 1970's for black empowerment and the realization of the deficiencies which existed in the education available to African-American children in the public educational system. Humphrey said she was bitten by the "cultural movement" which began as the Independent Black School Movement that was taking place throughout the country. It later became known as the African-centered Education Movement. [210]

The school officially opened in 1974 and operated as a Saturday school until 1976. During that time, the founders focused on developing and field testing African-centered education theory.[211] "We practiced the value of Ujima and pooled our resources and planned for a couple of years to have a school," Humphrey said. "We started the Alexander Crummell Affirmative School as a Saturday School which was very successful and there were droves of parents who sent their children to the Saturday School. After two years of success as a supplementary Saturday school, the Alexander Crummell Affirmative School opened as a full day school."[212] The school was housed in five locations: The Alexander Crummell Center for

---

[208] Thelma "Razia" Curtis interview conducted by author July 2008

[209] Gloria House interview conducted by author October 10, 2008

[210] Imani Humphrey interview conducted by author August 5, 2009

[211] Staff, "Detroit's Oldest African-centered School Celebrates 30 years and a broader vision for the future," *Detroit News,* June 2005

[212] Imani Humphrey interview conducted by author, April 4, 2009

Worship and Learning at 74 Glendale, Highland Park, 1974-76, 222 Palmer (Lewis College of Business) 1976-77, Wyoming and Linden (Current Muslim Mosque) 1977-79, the Blessed Sacrament High School 80 Belmont 1979-1980, Augustana Lutheran Church Curtis near Schaefer 1981, and the YWCA 13130 Woodward Ave. Highland, Park.

In 1974 Alexander Crummell Affirmative School severed its relationship with the Episcopal Church and assumed the name Aisha Shule Affirmative School. They established a new home and added a preschool component. From 1982 until 1992, Aisha Shule served children from age of two- and-a-half to 12 in Pre-K to Grade 7.[213] In 1992 the Aisha Shule leadership opened W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy, the first African-centered secondary school in the state. W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy continued the education that was implemented at the elementary level by the Aisha Shule School. This strategy was implemented to allow the graduating students to continue their African-centered educational path. W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy initially consisted of 8th and 9th grade levels, adding one grade level annually as the senior students progressed. Within three years the W.E.B. Dubois Academy served students in grades 9 through 12. Although the two schools were initially conceived as separate institutions they eventually merged and became the only K-12 African-centered school in the state. The school was organized into three divisions-- the Nile Valley (Pre-K through 3); the Pyramid Division (grades 4 through 7); and the W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy (grades 8 through 12).[214] The grade levels in each division are called work/study circles and are named after African ethnic groups such as Igbo, Fulani, etc. The students are

---

[213] *Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook* undated. P.2. the document is subtitled A Michigan Charter Independent Public School Academy Authorized by the Detroit Public School District, which suggests the document was in effect after 1994.

[214] Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook undated p.2

assigned the work/study circles across age and grade groupings that are based on ability, interests and social maturity rather than traditional grade levels.

Ideology/ Philosophy

The guiding ideology and philosophy of the Aisha Shule/W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory school as expressed in the school's promotional literature reflected that the school is clearly aligned with three of the four ideological/philosophical aspects presented by Doughty in the preceding sections. The institution's commitment to Kawaida is indicated in the Parent Handbook which asserts "we incorporate the Nguzo Saba into all we do." The Nguzo Saba is representative of a Pan Africanism/Black Nationalist value system comprised of seven principles: Umoja-unity, Kujichagulia-self-determination, Ujima-collective work and responsibility, Ujamaa- cooperative economics, Nia-purpose, Kuumba-creativity, and Imani-faith.[215] The philosophy of the school also indicated the institutions commitment to Pan Africanism and Black Nationalism; the philosophy of the school also indicated the institutions commitment to Pan Africanism and Black Nationalism; this is reflected in excerpts from the first three paragraphs of the schools philosophy. They proclaim, We believe in preparing talented young people to provide leadership and service for Afrikan people at home and abroad… that with the spiritual and moral strength inherited from our ancestors, and through the on-going struggle for justice, peace, and self-determination, the Dubois Preparatory experience will foster in the students a spirit of self-reliance and commitment to the rebuilding of our communities and reclaiming our traditional greatness… we believe that education is the gateway to liberation and that all students deserve to be fully and correctly educated with the truth of human endeavor. In the spirit of Sankofa Education, we must teach our students to reclaim and reconstruct Afrikan

[215] Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook, 3. Nguzo Saba the seven principals of Kwanza.

greatness, using knowledge to establish working relationships with Afrikan people throughout the Diaspora.[216] Spiritual development and personal transformation are also attributes which were essential to the school's philosophy.

Black Curriculum Development and Implementation

The Aisha Shule/Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook indicated that the school's curriculum focus is African-centered, humanities and interdisciplinary studies based, and designed to present a holistic context for learning and living in a diverse society. The curriculum document further explains that the curriculum addresses the Michigan Core Curriculum and includes concepts from the CIBI's Curriculum Development Project.[217] For the curriculum to be aligned with the Michigan Core Curriculum it is organized into five major components:

1. Math
2. Science and Technology
3. Culture (Social Studies, Art, Music, Dance, and Belief Systems)
4. Communication Skills (English, Foreign Languages, Creative and News Writing, Speech)
5. Physical Development (Health, Nutrition, Fitness, Martial Arts, Team Sports).[218]

The African-centered curriculum requires that the organization of the subject content must be integrated both horizontally and vertically, in such a way that it stresses holism and provides adequate detail appropriate for the level of instruction (cognitive level of the students), and be comprehensive enough to maintain the interrelated nature of the curricular fields, the

[216] *Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook*. P. 3 a copy of p. 3
[217] *Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook* P. 34
[218] *Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook* P. 34

curriculum must be powerful and mission oriented; the mission being the reconstitution of African descended people in America as a unified cultural, political, and economic, self-determinant national entity, (functioning within democratic society), the curriculum must reflect a humanistic concern with the self-awareness of the learner and the dynamic and reciprocal relationship of the teacher, learner, family and larger community. The curriculum must be integrated with the real efforts of institutions and individuals that are actively engaged in the nation-building process.[219]

The document concludes by asserting that the curriculum also incorporates content standards that are found in the Michigan Curriculum Framework of the Michigan Department of Education and that those standards have been restated, modified and amended where needed to reflect the intent of African-centered instruction.

Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition

Preceding renderings indicate that Aisha Shule was founded by a collective of families committed to an alternative type of education for their children. Parent and family participation has been essential to the operation of the school and effective education of the students. Parents are also expected to support and attend school productions and programs that their children participate in and to work visibly along with other parents to promote family interest and support. Furthermore it has been expected that both parents and students would be involved in an ongoing educational process. To facilitate the participation and education of the families, the Shule Family Organization (SFO) was established. Parents are required to attend or send a

[219] Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook (undated) P. 34-35

representative to the SFO and other parent meetings and to attend at least two parent training workshops per school year.[220]

The SFO membership is comprised of parents, teachers, and alumni. The organizational structure of the SFO is the Central Committee. Its members are appointed or elected and serve in an advisory capacity to the administration and staff.[221] The committee organizes and mobilizes parents to work on subsequent committees to accomplish specific functions, school business, parent business and concerns. Other responsibilities of the SFO includes the resolution of problems and concerns between parents and staff or administration, to assist in the general maintenance of the school building, and to serve as an advocate for parents and students, advise and consult with administration and the board of directors regarding the expansion, direction, and strengthening of the school policies and programs. The SFO keeps parents informed of their responsibilities and obligations to the school and assist in the planning and implementing school events. The SFO is also expected to provide leadership in the areas of fund-raising and recruitment.[222]

The Central Committee sub-committees include; Ways and Means, Communications, Publicity, Resources, Family Hood, Housing and Beautification, Technology, and Communication. Each sub-committee is co-chaired by a parent and a staff member who sit on the Central Committee. All related activities are coordinated by the SFO chairperson and the school administration.

---

[220] Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook (undated) P. 8

[221] Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook P. 8

[222] Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook P. 8

In addition to the framing domains of the African-centered Education Movement established by the Council of Independent Black Institutions, Aisha Shule/ Dubois Preparatory Academy is also comprised of several peripheral institutions and programs that support the schools mission. The preceding includes the Sankofa Society, the Pyramid Performance Theatre, and the annual Black Book Fair, Afrikan Ancestors Day, Sing a Song of Afrika, and the annual Kwanza program.

Sankofa Society

The Sankofa Society, the intense rite of passage program for the Aisha Shule/Dubois Preparatory Academy, prepares young men and women for adulthood. The society was established in 1992 and has two components-the all-female Akuaba Society and the all-male Akoben Warrior Society. There are two steps in the rites of passage process-the adolescence rites and the adult rites. The first phase is available to young women and men from ages 13 to 18 who have not graduated high school or completed their adolescence rites. The adult phase is available to students who have completed their adolescence rites and are preparing for graduation.

Akuaba Women's Society

The Akuaba Women's Society is the female component of the Sankofa Society. It is named for the famed Ghanaian fertility doll and is open to all women who are members of the Aisha Shule family. The young women of Akuaba honor Queen Nzinga and Yaa Asantwe as role models and prepare themselves to stand side-by-side with Black men in the struggle for the liberation of Afrikan People. Community service which is an essential aspect of the training includes community outreach and service, child care, distribution of clothing and toiletries for the homeless, and community forums. Each year the initiation process begins with preparing a

select group of adolescent women between the ages of 13 and 18. The initiates are mentored by the elders, society members, and their peers who have completed the initiation process.[223]

Akoben Warrior Society

The Akoben Warrior Society is the male component of the Sankofa Society. Open to all male members of the Aisha Shule family, Akoben members are trained to be defenders and protectors of their communities. As the members are prepared for adulthood, they are provided opportunities to engage in dialogue and collective action on issues that concern the African community locally and nationally. Like its female counterpart, Akoben training comes in two phases. The adolescence phase begins as early as 13 years old and the adult rites take place when initiates approach graduation and adulthood. Community service projects that Akoben warriors are required to engage in includes community clean-up and beautification, security patrols, and service to the poor and homeless which includes volunteering time and giving gifts of food and clothing.

Pyramid Performance Theatre

The Pyramid Performance Theatre (PPT), the school's Afrikan drum and Dance Company was founded in 1987 by Subira Karamoko, the school's former dance instructor and choreographer. The goal of the dance company is to promote Afrikan culture through drumming, dancing, performance and storytelling. The company is comprised of students between ages 8 and 18 years old. PPT members have studied with an international mix of master African musicians, dancers and artisans. The company has performed in a wide variety of venues for dignitaries, political leaders and heads of state including Mr. and Mrs. Walter Sisal and Winnie and Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

---

[223] The Aisha Shule annual Yearbook 1996, P. 10

Peripheral Activities and Events

The school also hosts annual activities designed to include the wider local community such as the Black Book Fair, Afrikan Ancestors Day, Sing a Song of Afrika and the Pre-Kwanza Celebration

Book Fair

The Book Fair includes a book drive in which younger students pledge to read a designated number of books in return for financial support of the school by the local community. Older students are required to read books authored by African and African-American authors and produce a book report and display board that reflects an African-centered interpretation of their assigned book. The Book Fair culminates in an exposition that showcases the students' work. The book fair is open to the general public.

Afrikan Ancestors Day

Afrikan Ancestors Day, held annually, is an Afrikan centered alternative to Halloween. Instead of supporting Halloween, the school conducts the Afrikan Ancestors day celebration in two venues. During the in-school celebration, students are instructed to conduct research on a personal, community or national African ancestor. After completing the research, the student produces a report about the designated ancestor. The students also write a biographical script and give a dramatic first-person presentation of the selected ancestor, wearing clothes that the ancestor would wear.

The presentation becomes the essence of the Ancestors Day program which is first performed for the students' families during the day and then repeated in the evening for the general public.

Sing a Song of Afrika

Sing a Song of Africa is an annual dramatic production which combines drama, music, dance and recitation and serves as a vehicle for generating revenue and doing community outreach this production, which is performed by the full student body, generally incorporates themes that reflect the historical and political struggle of people of African descent continentally and throughout the diaspora. Sing a Song of Afrika is produced annually and is generally held in a public venue.

Pre-Kwanzaa Celebration

Aisha Shule also conducts an annual pre-Kwanzaa Celebration which is held during the last week of school before students leave for their holiday break in December. During the pre-Kwanzaa Celebration, the Kwanzaa ritual that would normally be held during the seven days of Kwanzaa, is conducted. Along with the standard celebration, students are encouraged to perform and make items that can be sold in the marketplace. Vendors and the general public are also invited to participate in the celebration.

The inception, structure and basic programs that make up the Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy and its emergence as Detroit's first African-centered School have been examined. Its emergence was enhanced by the school's admission to the CIBI in 1976. The school would become a founding member of the organization and Imani Humphrey, its director served on the policy making and leadership board until 1999 when the school resigned from CIBI.

Aisha Shule's participation in CIBI was significant in that CIBI served as a major force in the in the Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement for nearly 40

years. In 1989, the Nsoroma Institute emerged out of Aisha Shule as a result of an exodus of several discontented parents.

Nsoroma Institute Public School Academy

Nsoroma Institute was founded in 1989 by a group of dissatisfied parents who left Aisha Shule. The departure was due to a dispute between Malik Yakini, a teacher and parent of Aisha Shule and the school's director Imani Humphrey. Yakini said that his connection to the institution spanned as far back as 1976. "I think in 1976 Mama Imani Humphrey and several of others associated with the Alexander Crummell Center For Worship and Learning I think it was called, in Highland Park developed a school called the Alexander Crummell Affirmative School, which was in the basement of the church. I was interacting with them and in fact, they introduced me to Kwanzaa in December of 1975. So from the very beginning I had some affiliation with the school. I was in college at the time, but I was referring people that I knew were coming back to Detroit to get in touch with Mama Imani."[224]

Yakini explained that he was connected to the school from 1976 through 1989 and served in a variety of capacities which included helping the school with each of its relocations, conducting slide presentations and teaching math and science. Yakini said that he "was very supportive of Mama Imani Humphrey, and would probably say I was in many ways her right-hand man."[225] He said that he felt obligated to work with her because he was dedicated to institution building and this [Aisha Shule] was the only example of independent African School development that he saw in Detroit.[226]

---

[224] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 1, 2009 in Detroit, Mi., 10.
[225] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 1, 2009 in Detroit, Mi., 10.
[226] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 1, 2009 in Detroit, Mi., 10.

Several of Nsoroma Institute's participants who were interviewed were unwilling to speak on the record regarding the dispute between Humphrey and Yakini that resulted in the departure of several families from Aisha Shule. I will attempt to reconstruct this event with respect for the privacy request of the parents. Yakini, who spoke on the record, said that in "October of 1989 there was a parent meeting at the Shule, which really got ugly because I was concerned about the level of proficiency of the students. This was when they were first forming the school's African dance company, the Pyramid Performing Theatre."[227] Yakini said "I was concerned that there were students who were deficient in math (which he taught) and that their participation in the dance company took priority over student academic performance." And that he thought Humphrey "felt it was inappropriate for me to make such comments in a parent meeting" and that the comments "were under minding her authority in the meeting"[228] Yakini expressed that his intent was "not to destroy the institution it was to make it better." The tension between Humphrey and Yakini was heightened by a verbal exchange between his estranged wife Nkiruka Yakini and Hassina Murphy, Humphrey's daughter.

He explained that "Nkiruka began voicing her views and got loud and she and Hassina got into a back and forth" which nearly developed into a physical confrontation. Yakini was dismissed from Aisha Shule and his children's enrollment was terminated. Yakini said that his dismissal occurred over the course of two meetings with Humphrey within one week of the incident. At one meeting that Humphrey called, Yakini was presented with a letter that had a long list of charges against him, a statement of termination of his children's enrollment and of his dismissal and a warning that he should not set foot on the school's campus or try to contact

[227] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 1, 2009 in Detroit, Mi.,2
[228] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 1, 2009 in Detroit, Mi.,2

her or any of her family members.[229] Yakini said that the letter was circulated to the CIBI leadership which included Haki Madhubuti and Hanibal Afrik. According to Yakini, Humphrey circulated a letter to the parents seeking to "put the matter to bed." The letter suggested that it may be time to start another school and that if there were any parents who didn't like it they should also leave. Yakini said that his departure caused a firestorm that resulted in other parents pulling their children out of the school.

Along with Yakini and his wife Nkiruka, the other departing families were Kalenda and Jendyi Iyi, Motisila Anderson, Nkenga Zola Beamon, Kianga Kalfani and Loretta Brooks. Those families were left with the challenge of obtaining an education for their children. Motisala explained that she had tried home schooling her daughter but was unsuccessful. Yakini said, "I started homeschooling my children because I wasn't working at the time. I had flexibility in my schedule."[230] Yakini held classes daily with his two children at his wife's house. When other parents learned that he was home schooling his children, he explained "they began to ask could their children come over and be home schooled as well. The group eventually became too large to be contained in my wife's home and that we began meeting at the main branch of the Detroit Public Library on a daily basis."[231] After a few weeks of meeting at the library, one of the parents, Kalenda Iyi, suggested that the group start a school. "We started from absolute scratch," said Motisala Anderson, another parent who had many meetings at her house where they discussed logistics and voted on decisions. "We also had a few meetings at Nkiruka's place,

[229] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 1, 2009 in Detroit, Mi., 5.
[230] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April,1, 2009, 5.
[231] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April, 1, 2009, 6.

while other meetings would be at Kalenda's Martial Arts studio. We also discussed what would the structure be and were we going to get a license," Motisala said.[232]

On November 29, 1989, the departing parents of Aisha Shule decided to begin the Nsoroma Institute. The school was housed in the Ta-Merrian Martial Arts Studio at Davison Street and Woodward Avenue, according to Yakini. The parents that departed from Aisha Shule became the founding members of Nsoroma Institute. The school started with 12 students and three teachers—Yakini, Mama Kianga and Mama Nkiruka.[233] "We were in one small room in Kalenda's Martial Arts School. Mama Kianga taught the students in kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade on one side of the room and that I had 3rd, 4th and 5th grades on the other side of the room."[234] Yakini also explained that there was a short-lived pre-school component taught by Nkiruka Yakini. It lasted only one week due to a fall-out between Nkiruka and Mama Kianga, Nkiruka left as a result of it. "We decided we were going to start this school temporarily until the semester ended in January 1990, and we were going to gauge how the students did and determine after that point one of two options; either we would continue the school, or we would put all of the students in the same Detroit Public School and get on the Local School Community Organization (LSCO) and try to influence that school through the LSCO," Yakini said. "After the first six weeks or whatever it was we saw such tremendous progress on the part of the students that we were compelled to continue the school so we just kept moving forward."[235] The school initially operated as an unlicensed, underground school that was unable to

---

[232] Motisala Anderson interview conducted by author December 12, 2009, 19.
[233] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 1, 2009, 6.
[234] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author April 4, 2009, 6.
[235] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author, April 4, 2009, 7.

advertise.[236] Yakini explained that in the beginning they presented themselves to the state as a home school collective because the state required that they account for why their children were not in school. He further explained that shortly after filing the home school papers with the state the group realized that in order to sustain themselves economically they needed more students. Realizing the need to advertise to attract students so the school would be economically viable, the founding parents decided they would officially establish themselves as a school.

At its beginning the school was governed by the founding parents. Decisions were made by consensus. The governing body consisted of the seven founding families. For legal purposes they established the Afrikan Child Enrichment Association and listed their address as 10430 Tireman, Detroit, Michigan 48204. The signing parties on the assumed named papers included Yakini, Loretta Brooks, Monica Henderson, and Teresa N.Z. Beamon.[237] Nsoroma Institute has been housed in several locations--the Ta-merrian School of Martial Arts at Woodward and Davidson, Old Solid Rock Missionary Baptist Church at 580 East McNichols near Woodward Ave, the Highland Park YMCA, Soul Harvest Ministries Church at 16300 Woodward near Six Mile Rd., The Clinton Education Center in Oak Park, Michigan and currently at 20045 Joann St. on Detroit's East side.

Nsoroma Institute was founded as an independent school and operated as such until 1998, when it became a charter school. Yakini said that the school was greatly influenced by Aisha Shule and CIBI. The school began as an elementary school serving grades K-5. By 1994

---

[236] Malik Yakini interview conducted by author, April 4, 2009, 6.

[237] Assumed name papers signed on January 20, 1990 and filed in the Wayne County Clerk's office February 16, 1990. This document was retrieved from the un-cataloged Nsoroma Institute archives, Documents were made available via the current director's (Malik Yakini) permission.

Nsoroma Institute had added 6th through 8th grades and currently operates as a K through 8th grade.

The framing domains of African-centered education shall serve as the framework to conduct the following examination of Nsoroma Institute's ideology, philosophy, curriculum and academic programs.

Ideology/Philosophy

An examination of Nsoroma Institute's Educational Philosophy indicated that the school's philosophy was clearly aligned with the framing domains of African-centered education as previously presented. While the statement made no clear reference to Kawaida or its inclusion in the school's daily activities there was a page in the 1994-95 Parent Handbook which listed the Nguzo Saba (seven principals of Kwanzaa) and their definitions. During an interview Yakini said, "The Nguzo Saba is an important framework in the school's operation and that teachers are urged to employ it in the preparation of lesson plans."[238] The school also hosts two annual Kwanza celebrations. One of them is conducted during the school day at the end of the fall semester and the other is open to the public and conducted during the annual Kwanza season (December 26 through January 1).

The Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook was replete with information supportive of the domains of Pan Afrikanism and Black Nationalism. The second paragraph of the educational philosophy states: "We are guided by a philosophy that seeks to: develop within our children insight into their individual gifts, talents and missions, connect our children with the rich and diverse historical and cultural legacies of Afrikan peoples and seek to restore a worldview which reflects an understanding of the inter-dependence of humans, plants, animals, the air, water, soil

[238] Malik Yakini interview conducted by the author, April.4, 2009, 6.

and natural elements which create the delicate balance that sustains life on the planet earth"[239] and reflects the Pan Africanist concept. Furthermore, Pan Africanism is evident in the statement "all Black People are Afrikan and bound together racially, historically, culturally, politically, and emotionally."[240] Both statements link the school's philosophy with Pan Africanist Ideology.

The Pan African perspective is also supported in the section of the Parent Handbook entitled *Nsoroma Institute a Model of Afrikan Institutional Development.* It proclaims "Nsoroma Institute continues in the Pan Africanist tradition of building unity and self-determination and providing a model of institution-building for our community. We do this in concert with the other independent Afrikan-centered schools throughout the United States."[241]

The preceding reference also speaks to the attributes of Black Nationalism. It links the school with CIBI and is further supported by renderings found in the second paragraph of the document that says "inherent in this world view is the understanding that oppression is wrong. [and] Any system or set of circumstances which limits a people from realizing their fullest expression of their human potential must be replaced with ways of relating spiritually, socially, politically and economically which facilitate peace, prosperity, health, happiness, and maximum human development." The above passages also connect the school's philosophy to the attributes self-determination and self-respect which are key components of Black Power.

Finally, the school's educational philosophy is replete with references to the school's focus on spiritual development which are expressed in the 4th and 7th paragraphs. Paragraph 4

---

[239] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook 1994 p.4, Nsoroma Institute un-cataloged archives.

[240] Doughty, A Historical Analysis of Black Education-Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement, 1973

[241] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook 1994-95 school year p. 3, Nsoroma Institute un-cataloged archives.

asserts that "our approach to education is holistic because we structure our program to stimulate the intellect of our students with a vigorous academic schedule, provide daily opportunities for physical development and encourage spiritual awareness and development through the teaching of meditation techniques."[242] Paragraph 7 states:

> Finally our educational philosophy is consistent with the ancients who believed education is the process of drawing out that which is already inside the student. Education is primarily a process of self-discovery. It is a journey of self-realization. The "teacher" is actually a guide who provides nurturing, love, information and experiences which aid the learner in growing into knowledge of the individual and the collective self.[243]

Black Curriculum Development and Implementation

Nsoroma Institute clearly positions itself as an African-centered institution.[244] There was no curriculum section found in any of the Parent Handbooks examined, however a perusal of the literature and an interview with Yakini revealed evidence of an African-centered curriculum. At the school's inception, according to Yakini, "the initial teachers were teachers at Aisha Shule. We pretty much used the same template that we had been working with at Aisha Shule to drive instruction." This suggests that in the beginning, the curriculum was clearly influenced by the curriculum approach that was practiced at Aisha Shule. There were other influences such as the state standards and the CIBI Curriculum Guide. Yakini explained "we also looked at what the state objectives were in some areas those were good guide guidelines… you know... in a lot of guideline areas they gave us some good parameters and then we purchased the book *The Compendium of Knowledge* published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum

[242] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook 1994-95. 4.
[243] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook.1994-95. 4.
[244] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook.1994-95. 4.

Development. So we looked at that and what other school districts across the country were doing to kind of get . . . you know . . . some general parameters as to what children should be taught at various grade levels.[245]

Reflecting on the use of the CIBI Curriculum Guide, Yakini said "CIBI has curriculum documents that we looked at as well. And, initially some of those were very. . . vague and . . . you know, they were helpful to some extent in terms of developing broad outlines, but were not real helpful in terms of the specifics of what should be taught."[246] Additionally the sections entitled *Nsoroma Institute: a Model of Afrikan Institutional Development and Characteristics* of an *African-centered approach* reflected African-centered curriculum attributes employed by the school. The former document identified math, science, language skills, and social studies as the core subjects. Along with the core subjects physical development exercises that were strongly emphasized included conditioning, gym, swimming, African drum and dance, African martial arts and weekly art classes that explored creative ways of creating physical representations of inner beauty. Food security was also a strong component of the curriculum.[247] The second document, *Characteristics of an Afrikan-Centered Approach,* identified six characteristics of the approach. It views Afrikan people as the center of human reality, sources, references and materials are primarily by Afrikans, views Afrikans as the originators of civilization and as the mother of humanity; takes into account the right brain dominant learning style of Afrikans,

[245] Malik Yakini interview conducted by the author April 4, 2009. 2

[246] Malik Yakini interview conducted by the author April 1, 2009 3. The interview reference is to the Council of Independent Black Institutions curriculum guide: *Positive African Images.*

[247] Nsoroma Institute 1994-95 Parent Handbook p. 2 Nsoroma Institute un-cataloged archives.

combines varied disciplines into a harmonious whole; is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Afrikan people and supports Afrikan self-reliance.[248]

Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition

Parental involvement is a very important aspect of the Nsoroma Institute's educational program which strongly emphasizes the African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child." Parental involvement is driven by the school's adage "all teachers are parents and all parents are teachers."[249] Nsoroma was founded and initially operated by the parents of its students. Historically it has presented itself as "an extended family institution." The school expects parents to participate in the student's classroom and other school activities. The school operates with an open door policy and encourages family members to drop by as they wish. The school also provides a more structured approach to parental involvement through the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) which has five subcommittees that meet monthly. The PAC makes decisions and does work that insures the growth and longevity of the school.[250] The parents are expected to contribute a minimum of 2.5 days per semester and participate in school activities. The PAC has five subcommittees: education, facilities, fundraising, publicity and family hood.

Peripheral Programs

Nsoroma also has programs and events that supplement the main academic programs. They include the Mama and Baba Clubs, Rites of Passage program, the Thiosane (Cho-San) African drum and dance company, the Community Education program and the Food Security Program.

---

[248] Nsoroma institute Parent Handbook, 1994-1995. 5

[249] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook, 1994-1995. 30

[250] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook, 1994-1995. 30

Mama and Baba Clubs

The Mama and Baba Clubs are auxiliary programs that provide additional support to the school through supplementary activities. The membership is mainly comprised of Nsoroma Institute parents but is also open to adult members of the extended Nsoroma community. The Mama and Baba Clubs are the key facilitators of the school's rites of passage program.

Rites of Passage

The Nsoroma Institute conducts an annual Rites of Passage program designed to prepare boys and girls for adolescence through a process facilitated by the community elders. The program operates from January through June and participants consist of students from grades six through eight. Its purpose is to pass on information necessary for people of African descent to survive, thrive and progress. The curriculum focuses on issues such as family, economics, finances, culture, history and community service.[251]

Thiosane African Drum and Dance Ensemble

Thiosane (Cho-San), Nsoroma Institute's performing arts company formed in 1998 by Yakini and Mama Fabayo Mazira, serves as the school's cultural ambassadors and emissaries to the broader community. Their mission is best reflected in the company's name which means "keepers of the culture" in the West African language of Wolof. The company members are Nsoroma students and alumni who are formally trained in traditional Afrikan dance techniques as well as African history and culture. The students perform traditional dances from Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, and Mali.

Community Education Program

[251] Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook 2005-06, P.21

The Community Education Program (CEP), established in 1998 is consistent with the founding principle community education of the CIACEM. Keeping with this principle Nsoroma implemented the CEP which is designed to extend the type and quality of education implemented in the school to the broader community. CEP functions as a separate entity and operates after school and on Saturdays providing academic and extra-curricular programs such as French, Kiswahili, African drumming and dancing, the ancient Egyptian language of Medu Neter, African head wrapping, African cooking, tie dying and African sewing classes.

Food Security Program

Since 2000 Nsoroma Institute has operated a Food Security Program to address the nutritional needs of the extended African-American community. The program is included in the school curriculum and extends to the broader community. The program emphasizes the Nguzo Saba principles of *Kujichagulia (*self- determination), *Ujamma* (cooperative economics) and *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility). Classes in agriculture, honey production, harvesting and food distribution are taught and the program maintains a 50-acre farm in the community and a series of personal farms.

Along with the educational programs, Nsoroma hosts two annual Kwanzaa Celebrations, an African Language Fair, African Math Fair, Science Fair and the annual Black Reading month campaign.

In this chapter I have examined the early inception of the CIACEM that emerged after the failure of the Community Control of Schools Movement when parents, families and community activists fought to have more say in the type of education their children were receiving in the public schools. They opted to create their own independent and private schools guided by the concepts of African cultural relevance and Black Nationalism. From 1969 through 1972 these

independently owned and operated schools emerged in various locales throughout the United States. By 1972, the founders of those schools became the foundation of the CIACEM.

In this chapter the Uhuru Sasa Shule has been introduced as the institutional model of the Contemporary Independent African-centered Education Movement (CIACEM.) The Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) was established as the collective expression of this movement and also provided the philosophical and ideological framework for the CIACEM. The establishment of Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Academy and Nsoroma Institute was based on the models provided by Uhuru Sasa and CIBI. The formation of Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Academy and Nsoroma Institute laid the foundation and established the standard for the CIACEM. Establishment of those educational institutions and other events constitute the Independent phase of the CIACEM. As the foundation of the CIACEM was being laid in the private sector, similar work was being done in the public domain. The following chapter will examine the work that resulted in the implementation of African-centered education philosophy in Detroit public schools and the eventual formation of several African-centered public schools.

Chapter 3

The Independent/Public Phase 1990-1995

The Independent/Public phase of the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement (CIACEM) spans from 1990 until 1995. This phase is characterized by the public adoption of African-centered education philosophy within the DPS (public domain). This chapter examines the efforts of those within the public domain to implement African-centered education philosophy. These efforts include the individual work of DPS teachers, the work of community activist organizations, and the collective acts of various entities within the DPS. The contributions of these entities facilitated the evolution of the DPS from teetering on the fringes of African-centered education philosophy to its full immersion within its curriculum, to the establishment of several African-centered schools and the adoption of African-centered education philosophy throughout the DPS.

During the Pre Formal phase of the CIACEM discussions were held by the movement's pioneers regarding whether advocacy for African-centered education should occur within the existing school systems or via the establishment of schools that were independent of public schools systems. Although the major thrust regarding this matter was for the former (the establishment of schools that were private and independent of public school systems), there were efforts made by numerous educators within the DPS to provide an African-centered education to the students they taught. Reflecting on these efforts in the DPS, Imani Humphrey and Dahia Shabaka were both teachers that were either influenced by the efforts of such educators and/or demonstrated similar efforts as such educators.

Imani Humphrey co-founder and director of Aisha Shule/W.E.B. Dubois Academy was a teacher who worked to implement African-centered materials into her pedagogy as a public

school teacher. Humphrey recalled the early influence of several teachers she encountered while attending a high school in Inkster, a predominantly African-American suburb of Detroit. These teachers "were young and many of them had graduated from Black colleges,"[252] Humphrey said. The teachers had "an intimate concern for each and every student" and promoted a political pedagogy that emphasized morals, achievement, and etiquette and community service.[253] Humphrey eventually became an educator who built upon the efforts of her teachers.

According to community activist Rev. Dan Aldridge, Imani Humphrey who was formerly known as Fannie Humphrey was active at the former Eastern High School as a "conscious raiser," during the student protest movement of the 1960's. African-centered scholar Dr. Joyce Piert also recognized the same thing about Humphrey in her dissertation SBA*: Teaching, Wisdom, and Study: An Exploration of the Experiences of African-American youth who attended an African-centered school*. She explains that during negotiations with Eastern High School administrators, student leaders asked Humphrey to present their demands. She was also instrumental in advocating for and the development of curricula in Afro-American literature and history, which was later made mandatory in DPS.[254] Humphrey also helped galvanize the African-American community to lobby for renaming the high school in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. shortly after his death. Humphrey later taught at the Oakland Prep School, an adult education school geared toward urban youth that had been adjudicated. "We had a lot of Malcolm X's there . . . kids who had stopped reading in the eighth grade, but once they had

---

[252] Joyce Piert, *"*SBA (Teaching, Wisdom, and study) An Exploration of the Experiences of African-American Young People Who Attended an African-centered School," (doctoral dissertation Michigan State University), 9.

[253] Piert *"*SBA (Teaching, Wisdom, and study) An Exploration of the Experiences of African-American Young People Who Attended an African-centered School," 10

[254] Piert, *"*SBA (Teaching, Wisdom, and study) An Exploration of the Experiences of African-American Young People Who Attended an African-centered School," 12.

started reading again and what we gave them was interesting to them because [we] gave them a lot of revolutionary text," she said. Humphrey eventually became acquainted with Haki Madhubuti and others in different parts of the country . . . who began to work on what we now call African-centered curriculum." [255] Humphrey later co-founded Detroit's first African-centered school, Aisha Shule Affirmative School.

Dahia Shabaka is another of these pioneers who made individual contributions to the development of the CIACEM. Shabaka who recently retired as the director of social studies for the DPS, began her career as a teacher in the late 1960s, and also served as an administrator and director of social studies for the board. Shabaka said that she began teaching in the DPS in February 1968. She discussed her early efforts to implement African-centered curricula materials in her teaching at a high school she taught at early in her career. "You know I was like wanting to do this . . . we weren't calling it African-centered education at this time we were calling it something else. And I had to almost like get permission to do it. I developed something called minority history just so that it would be sellable to the administration and I remember focusing on three groups, African-Americans, Native Americans and I am not sure . . . I just decided to do this based on my knowledge and that we (people of African descent) had been sold out, left out. I did this when I first started to teach."[256]

Shabaka said that she taught at several middle and high schools and that "everywhere I went after that first experience I brought a part of me . . . what I needed to in terms of my classes

[255] Piert, "SBA (Teaching, Wisdom, and study) An Exploration of the Experiences of African-American Young People Who Attended an African-centered School," 12.
[256] Dahia Shabaka, interview by author, Detroit, MI., July 18, 2008.

with me."[257] Shabaka eventually left the classroom and became an instructional specialist and curriculum leader and pushed for inclusion of African-centered curriculum materials at every level she worked on.

Shabaka explained that under the decentralization of the school board which occurred in the early 70's she worked in Region 8 where she interacted with like-minded teachers who were working to reshape the existing curriculum. Zodie Johnson one of the Region 8 administrators was a major influence on those who worked for her, said Shabaka. "Ms. Johnson [she] was a person who believed in who we were and that we should be talking about it and so every Friday she'd call us in and she would say, 'Well what did you do this week?' When she finished that, she would always ask us, 'Well . . .' She would name some book, her favorite book was *Mis-Education of the Negro*, she would say, 'You should read this,' and then she would quote some things from the book."[258]

Shabaka was promoted to curriculum leader and reassigned to work at the High School Development Center (HSDC) which will be discussed in greater length later in this chapter. She expressed "it was at this school that I really began to write things down and began to implement and see African-centered education. . . it was my first opportunity to see if I could make it a school wide effort."[259] Shabaka's additional contributions to the development of African-centered education philosophy at the DPS will be discussed later. I have attempted to illustrate that there were teachers who contributed to the DPS's journey to become the first public African-centered school district. There were also contributions made by groups of parents and

[257] Dahia Shabaka, interview by author, Detroit, MI., July 18, 2008. 3.
[258] Shabaka, interview by author, Detroit, MI., July 18, 2008. 3.
[259] Shabaka, interview by author, Detroit, MI., July 18, 2008. 5.

community activists to the African-centered effort. The Community Task for Education (CTFE) was an important one of them.

The Community Task Force for Education

The Community Task Force for Education (CTFE) was a grassroots organization founded by several community activists who were also connected to the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization (ASCAC) and the National Black United Front (NBUF). CTFE Co-founder Bonatchi Montgomery explained "ASCAC and the Black United Front were primarily two organizations (national) across the country that were pushing for African-centered education from the Nationalist [Black] perspective."[260] ASCAC's role in the development of African-centered education was reflected by member contributions to the Portland Baseline Essays which were written by ASCAC scholars.[261] Community activist Mzee Nabawi additionally explained that ASCAC's "whole purpose was to define African-centered education,

[260] Bonatchi Montgomery, interview by author, Detroit, Mi., April 7, 2009, The Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization and the National Black United Front are 2 Black Nationalist Community Organizations. ASCAC is committed to the generation of "knowledge that continuously contributes to the rescue. reconstruction and restoration of African history and culture. Our purpose is to promote the study of African civilizations for the development of an African world view." www. ASCAC.Org. The "Black United Front" is an organization made up of concerned and committed individuals and organizations who have united to assume responsibility for working and leading the struggle for a better life for them and their children. The Black United Front is a broad-based organization which includes all social, political, religious and cultural sections of the Black community. www.Nbufront.org

[261] Bonatchi Montgomery, interview conducted by author, April 7, 2009. 6. The Baseline Essay are also discussed in the introduction of this document. These Essays were co-authored by Dr. John H. Clarke and Dr. Asa Hilliard. The essay was of the earliest published documents that comprise the contemporary body of African-centered Education literature. "ASCAC Conference A Great Event" Conrad Worrill, *Sun Reporter* San Francisco, Calif.: Apr.6, 1995. Vol.51, Iss. 14; pg.B7, Conrad Worrill, *NBUF Hosts Afrocentric Education Convention*, Philadelphia Tribune. Philadelphia, Pa.: Jun 20, 1995 Vol. 112, Issue. 49; pg. 6-A

and to bring back and develop historiography relative to African history and to reclaim our fame."[262]

CTFE Co-founder Tahirah Akmed said the organization grew out of her concern for the poor quality of education her that son was receiving. She said that her son "was attending the DPS and we came to find out that he wasn't getting basic information that should have been in all history books, not just in Black history"[263] An outraged Akmed approached the school board as an individual parent thinking her efforts were ineffective. The change she desired was not going to happen because she felt that DPS alienated and stereotyped individuals who complained. Akmed met with Mzee Nabawi, Bonatchi Montgomery and Malik Yakini and founded the CTFE.

The founders and executive board members were Tahira Akmed, Mzee Nabawi, Said Mulagala, Malik Yakini, Bonatchi Montgomery and Rukia Kitwana. The group began in the 1980s, according to Nabawi with the mission "to arrest the incompetence of the educational curriculum so that we would impact our children and to show that Black people were the impetus of all world history and to show they were the people they created and that they did what they did, and not just to have a Black history class but to inculcate it into the curriculum in math, science, and everything and not just a class."[264] Nabawi said their "purpose was to Africanize the schools by advocating for the implementation of African-centered curriculum in DPS."[265]

During its tenure, CTFE established a working relationship with DPS administrators and board members. This relationship, strong yet covert, began with the immersion of African-

---

[262] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, Detroit, Mi. September 1, 2009. 6.
[263] Tahirah Akmed, interview by author, Detroit, MI., November 23, 2009. 1.
[264] Tahirah Akmed, interview by author, Detroit, MI., November 23. 2009. 5.
[265] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, Detroit, MI, September 1, 2009. 3.

centered materials into the existing curriculum; the implementation of several African-centered strategies by the board, the establishment of several African-centered schools within, and the system-wide adoption of African-centered curriculum which finally resulted in the designation of the DPS as an African-centered school district.

The CTFE was strengthened as it formed alliances with other community groups such as Black Parents for Quality Education, led by educational activist Helen Moore, and an organization led by community businessman Ray Lit. These groups collectively formed the coalition People to Open Schools (POS).[266] Akmed and Nabawi said that while the other entities focused more on general educational goals, CTFE's focus was the establishment of African-centered curriculum. When Akmed gave a presentation on African-centered education at a Detroit School Board meeting, she caught the attention of the Drs. Norman McCrae and Catherine Blackwell, the board's social studies administrators, did not need to be persuaded to consider including African-centered curriculum material, Akmed said. They were already "down with it." "They knew there was a lack of information and correct information about world history," Akmed said. "They were upset about it but what could they do, they were not activists".[267] When Akmed met with McCrae and Blackwell, "they told us what they could do and what they liked, although they never told us what they did in the background, they met with us, they listened to us and they pushed our agenda in their own way. We couldn't have done it by ourselves because we didn't run into brick walls when we met with Blackwell and McCrae."[268]

[266] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, Detroit, MI., September 1, 2009. 3.
[267] Tahirah Akmed, interview by author, Detroit, MI., November 21, 2009. 9.
[268] Tahirah Akmed, interview, November 21, 2009, 9.

Along with their relationship with particular DPS administrators, CTFE members also established a working relationship with four members of the school board who operated as a voting bloc. In 1988, when Detroit voters elected a new school board, four of them were committed to changing the existing paradigm that governed how the public schools operated. They became a voting bloc known as the HOPE team.

Lawrence Patrick, who was part of the HOPE team, said that he and colleagues Frank Heyden, Joe Blanding, and David Olmstead ran and were elected on the common agenda that parents should have choices and decisions should be made at the school level about how to educate the children. The HOPE team's perspective was highlighted in a document dated November 2, 1988 and titled *P.D.Q.: Elements for School Success in Detroit.* Item 2 Empowerment states that "the cornerstone of the P.D.Q. plan must be local school empowerment—moving authority, resources and responsibility for educational results to the only unit in the school system where the teaching and learning actually occur—the individual school."[269] Patrick said that their commitment was to empowering the schools at the local level, and that "rather than advocating for African-centered education per say we were committed to ensuring that the curriculum told the truth."[270] That was the center of our campaign and became the center of our agenda once we got elected." Nabawi identified board member Blanding as "our guy."[271] "Joe Blanding was a union representative, who paid

[269] Document obtained from former Detroit Board of Education board member (HOPE team) Lawrence Patrick Titled P.D.Q. Elements for School Success in Detroit (Circulation Copy) the document was dated November 2, 1988. The document indicated P.D.Q. was an abbreviation for Putting Dollars into Quality.

[270] Lawrence Patrick interview by author in Detroit, Mi. June 2010

[271] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, Detroit, Mi. 9-01-09, 10.

attention at the school board meetings, and was really gung ho," he said[272] "Most of the moves towards African-centered education from the HOPE team came from Joe Blanding with a lot of support from Lawrence Patrick."

An example of the effectiveness of this relationship is illustrated in their combined efforts to ensure that the textbooks purchased by the school board would support African-centered curriculum. Nabawi explained that CTFE was making "extreme progress in the system we had revamped when they first decided not to buy any textbooks until they [textbook publishers] got it right."[273] When confronted with the challenge of selecting and purchasing textbooks, Nabawi said that the combined entities had the "textbooks companies head over heels trying to get these books right."[274] It was unclear which board member made the decisions, however their position was that "we are not buying any more textbooks until you all get it right."[275] The collective intent of the school board and CTFE as textbook reviewers was to change the images, certain phraseologies and geographical misrepresentations. They wanted the material placed in proper context and racist terminology eliminated. [276] Yakini, Montgomery and Nabawi wrote curriculum that was integrated into as many subjects as possible. [277] They also wrote supplements to books in use by the school system. CTFE was involved in many community protests supporting African-centered education and sustained a media presence in support of it for 15 years.

---

[272] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, Detroit, Mi. 9-01-09, 10.
[273] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, Detroit, MI., September 1,2009. 11.
[274] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, September 1, 2009.11
[275] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, September 1, 2009. 11.
[276] Mzee Nabawi, interview by author, September 1, 2009. 11.
[277] Tahirah Akmed, by author, Detroit, MI., November 23, 2009. 6.

Detroit Board of Education

The DPS have demonstrated a history indicative of a commitment to implement strategies within the school system that address cultural relevance in education. During the early 1960s we saw the efforts of the Group on Advance Leadership (GOAL) result in the implementation of a process to review textbooks to ensure their cultural relevance and sensitivity to the schools systems population.[278] The school board was prompted to initiate efforts to affect cultural relevance during the student protests. To construct a cohesive understanding of the evolution of DPS during this period, I have compiled a chronology of these key events with the assistance of Dahia Shabaka.[279] These events include the Black Child Placed in Crisis Conferences 1987, the creation of the African Heritage Cultural Center 1990, the establishment of Detroit's first African-centered all male academies in 1991, the framework and definition for African-centered education1 1992, an African-centered education Resolution 1993, the Indaba[280]/Guiding Principles for African-centered education1993-1994, and the immersion of an African-centered strand within the DPS Social Studies curriculum system wide.

Sankore Teacher Study Group

[278] Demonstration and Dialogue between Richard Henry (acting on behalf of the Group on Advance Leadership) and the DPS Superintendent. Discussed in chapter 1of this document.

[279] Unreleased documentary on African-centered Education entitled ACE, Narrated and hosted by Jeffery Miller. Outlined referenced presented by Dahia Shabaka (former director of Social Studies for DPS) during an employee in-service hosted by DPS. The events include The Black Child Placed in Crisis conferences 1986-19976, Framework and Definition for African-centered Education 1992, African-centered Education Resolution authored by the Detroit School Board and presented February 2, 1993, and the Indaba (Zulu word for Discussion) which was held for 2 years and presented as a written document in 1994.

[280] Indaba is a Zulu word for great discussion.

As an administrator in the DPS, Shabaka's efforts to immerse African-centered education materials and pedagogy within the DPS curriculum, included formation of a teacher-focused study group and the establishment of the Black Child Placed in Crisis Conference.

Shortly after the High School Development Center (HSDC) was established in 1987, Shabaka was promoted to the position of curriculum director. The center which was housed in the old Wilbur Wright High School building, was "another unique experience that provided me an opportunity to promote African-centered education,"[281] Shabaka explained the HSDC "was a new phenomenon along with other alternative schools it was different than what we have now. The students were shipped to the HSDC and stayed for a while until they completed their designated task." Shabaka asserted that it was at the HSDC that she "really begin to write things down and began to implement and see African-centered education as a system-wide effort. It was my first opportunity to see if I could make it a school wide effort and it had to be one of my best experiences because people began (other teachers) to buy into the idea." Their interest was expressed in their request and commitment to formulate and conduct a teacher study group. With Shabaka's help, the group was established as the Sankore Study group. The group met, studied and did all those things to learn what it takes to be an African-centered entity like the DPS. Shabaka explained "the group functioned well for 15 or 16 years and continues to exist but no longer meets." The High School Development Center eventually moved out of the Wilbur Wright School building into Knudson Jr. High school and changed its name to Frederick Douglass, Detroit's first Public African-centered high school. Prior to the HSDC relocation, Shabaka left the school and was promoted to supervisor of social studies for the broader DPS.

The Black Child Placed in Crisis Symposium/Conferences

[281] Dahia Shabaka, interview by author, Detroit, Mi. 7-18-08

The Black Child Placed in Crisis Symposium (BCPC) would be the next major step implemented by the DPS towards the adoption of African-centered education philosophy. Shabaka expressed that the implementation of the BCPC Symposiums were an effort to conduct research regarding the formation and implementation of African-centered curriculum and pedagogy within the DPS. The ten-year period in which the conferences were held "were supposed to be our [DPS] period of research and seeing what was out there we brought in all the [relevant] scholars."[282] Moreover, emphasizing the focus of the conference Shabaka asserts the word "placed" in the title was underlined because they (Black children) are placed in crisis, they don't just come to school in crisis they are placed there academically and educationally.

The BCPC conferences were implemented by a body of DPS educators i.e. teachers, administrators, and community members which was called the Professional Development Academy (PDA). The first conference was held March 5, 1988 at the Mercy Conference Center in Detroit. On that cold winter day the PDA anticipated 300 participants. To their surprise 700 persons attended.[283] The conference's initial focus was Detroit area educators, school personnel, parents and community members. By 1997, it attracted educators from throughout the African Diaspora. The year 1995 was a record-setting year as the symposium conveners boasted 3000 registered participants. The focus of the conference is reflected in the March 1997 symposium booklet which states: "For ten years the Professional Development Academy (PDA) has presented a series of conferences devoted to exploring the devastating statistics that reveal the plight of African-American children in classrooms across the country. The conferences have focused on social, economic and educational issues that particularly affect the well-being of

[282] Dahia Shabaka, interview by author in Detroit, Mi. 7-18-08
[283] Black Child Symposium Booklet

African-American children but are also sensitive to minority populations that have felt the sting of prejudice through misunderstanding. Past experiences reveal that this type of concentration benefits all children, e.g. Project Seed, Sesame Street and Head Start to name a few."[284]

During the ten-year period, the conferences operated under several themes which reflected the critical nature of Black education. During this period, the PDA also drew from a plethora of noted African-centered and related scholars and scholar/activists which include; Molefi Asante, Mary Frances Berry, Janice Hale-Benson, Asa Hilliard, Barbara Sizemore, Wade Nobles, Ivan Van Sertima, Hunter Adams, Na'im Akbar, Charshee Lawrence-McIntyre, Haki and Safisha Madhubuti (Carol Lee), Basil Davidson, Charles Finch, Catherine Blackwell, Maulana Karenga, Theophile Obenga, Randall Robinson, Anthony Browder, Cain Hope Felder, Alvin Poussaint, Iyanla Vanzant, Claude Anderson, Julianne Malveaux, and Linda James Meyers to name a few.[285] There were two activities of relevance to this work which emerged from the African-American Child Placed in Crisis Conference these were the dinner symposiums and Indaba Salons.

Considering that conferences alone do not generate strategies to cope with the issues raised or lend themselves to sustained interaction between presenters and participants, the PDA provided a series of monthly symposium dinners throughout 1988 and 1989 as follow ups to the African-American Child Placed in Crisis Conferences.[286] These meetings included dinner and a lecture by one of the prior symposium presenters. During the dinners, the participants were presented with a lecture that posed certain problems for dinner discussion and perspective

---

[284] Overview/introduction to Symposium Chronology as outlined in the Symposium Booklet dated March 7 and 8, 1997 Pg. Unknown.

[285] Black Child Symposium Booklet

[286] Black Child Placed in Crises Symposium Book March 7-8 1997

resolution. The result of these dinners include; equity for children, attitudes and expectations of educators and the infusion of African and African-American content in the curriculum all became themes of future conferences.[287]

African Heritage Culture Center

Another strategy to implement African-centered education philosophy in DPS was the creation of the African Heritage Culture Center (AHCC). This effort was a $40,000 project designed by the DPS to recreate a glimpse of Africa as it existed before Europeans settled there in the 1500's.

The AHCC which began as an exhibit, was created in 1990 "to motivate students and to educate everyone about the ancestry of Africans and African-Americans to let people know it is more than a legacy of slavery"[288] Dr. Arthur Carter explained that the project began as an effort to create an African village.[289] The exhibit included talking robotic replicas of Askia Muhammad, and other pre-colonial African personalities, along with a mock African marketplace and a reproduction of the Temple of Luxor (of Ancient Egypt) and a replica of Sankore University of Timbuktu and the pre-colonial West African City Djene.[290]

The exhibit was constructed by DPS students, staff and facility members. Carter explained that "in addition to historical lessons, students are learning carpentry, design and

---

[287] Black Child Placed in Crises Symposium Book March 7-8 1997

[288] Brenda Gilchrist, "Exhibit to Show History of Africa", *Detroit Free Press* October 24, 1990, 1b.

[289] Dr. Arthur Carter, interview by author, Highland Park, MI, 11-2-09

[290] Staff, *Michigan Chronicle* , untitled Article dated October 31, 1990

communication skills."[291] The project was constructed at the Detroit Public School's Randolph Vocational-Technical center under the direction of the school districts supervisor of art education Warren Hollier.[292] Hollier who later became the curator of the African Heritage Culture Center, described the experience as a "crash course in African history" and an "extremely enlightening experience."[293] The exhibit opened on November 8, 1990 at the Michigan State Fair Grounds and ran four days. Dr. Carter explained that the committee originally anticipated attracting 200 people but were overwhelmed when over 60,000 people viewed the exhibit over the four-day period.[294] The exhibit was additionally covered by Cable News Network (CNN). DPS member Joseph Blanding also organized a conference attended by 650 Detroit school teachers that discussed ways to use the historical data gathered for the exhibit in the classroom.[295] Due to the overwhelming success of the exhibit it was developed into a museum.

The exhibit evolved into an Ancient African History Museum which was housed in the old Reford Library and located at Grand River and W. McNichols. The Detroit Board of Education later added a school to the museum and built a new building to house the new school which was modeled on ancient Egyptian Architecture. The school and museum was subsequently closed as the African-centered focused began to decline within Detroit Public School during the mid to late 1990's.

---

[291] Brenda Gilchrist, "Exhibit to Show History of Africa", *Detroit Free Press,* October 24, 1990, 1b.

[292] Brenda Gilchrist, "Exhibit to Show History of Africa", *Detroit Free Press,* October 24, 1990, 1b.

[293] Brenda Gilchrist, "Exhibit to Show History of Africa", *Detroit Free Press,* October 24, 1990, 1b.

[294] Dr. Arthur Carter, interview by author, Highland Park, Mi. 11-2-09

[295] Brenda Gilchrist "Exhibit to Show History of Detroit" *Detroit Free Press,* 10-24-1990, 1b.

The African-centered Male Academies

The DPS next effort to implement African-centered education philosophy would be the establishment of several schools as African-centered schools. In an effort to intervene in the perceived crisis faced by African-American male students throughout the country in 1990, an ad hoc group of concerned educators organized the first public conference on problems facing African-American males. This conference was entitled "Improving Self Concept for At-Risk Black Students, with Emphasis on Saving the Black Male."[296] The conference committee was spearheaded by Joseph Gilbert (Principal of Detroit Mackenzie High school), Calvin McKinney (Detroit's Brooks Middle School Principal), Clifford Watson (Detroit's Woodward Elementary School Principal), and Dr. Geneva Smitherman (Michigan State University Representative).[297] The conference was attended by over 500 participants and was deemed an immense success. Inspired by the response to the conference three months later the Detroit Board of Education appointed a Male Academy Task Force to study the issues and to present to the board a plan and implementation strategies.[298] The Task Force was under the direction of former General Superintendent John Porter[299] and comprised of 16 members, which included Dr. Arthur Carter *Chairman*, Dr. Erma J. Gibbs *Principal Writer*, Mrs. Vernice Davis Anthony, Dr. Noah Brown, Mr. Joseph Gilbert, Mrs. Barbara Gilchrist, Dr. Linda Leddick, Dr. Alvin Ramsey, Mr. William

---

[296] Smitherman and Watson, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit Malcolm X Academy Solution,* 35-36. citing *Improving Self-Concept for at Risk Black Students, With Emphasis on Saving the Black Male*, Report on the first annual Conference (March 10) 1 June

[297] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males, Detroit Malcolm X Solution,*35.

[298] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males, Detroit Malcolm X Solution,* 37.

[299] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males, Detroit Malcolm X Solution, 37.*

Schimdt, Ms. Beverly Schnieder, Dr. Geneva Smitherman, Ricardo Solomon, Dr. Otis Stanley, Drs. Thomas Steel, William Aldridge and Clifford Watson.[300] The committee was given a six-month deadline (November 1990) and was aided by an existing proposal authored by Dr. Watson along with his years of research and experience working with school-based programs for African-American males.[301] The Task Force's report was submitted in December of 1990. The report indicated "that Detroit's Black Male Youth did indeed warrant the label 'at risk' and that the areas of "unemployment, homicide, and crime statistics mirrored the bleak profile of males in schools."[302]

The urgency of the Task Force findings were echoed in a letter composed by DPS Superintendent John Porter addressed to Persons Concerned about Quality Education in the DPS dated December 1990. It declared that "a male academy will be established to focus primarily on the critical, multiple needs of African-American males."[303] The letter identified the school as a "pilot…school of choice" with a plan that also addresses the content process of delivering the Afrocentric curriculum that assists students in developing self-esteem, a sense of history and connections with people and events that are illustrative of human potential and ability to

---

[300] Task Force members listed on Brochure cover page entitled "The DPS Introduces The Male Academy" obtain from the personal papers of Dr. Jeffrey Robison former Malcolm X Academy teacher.

[301] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution,* 38.

[302] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 38.

[303] Letter composed by Dr. John Porter obtained from the personal papers of Malcolm X Academy Principle Dr. Jeffrey Robinson.

overcome in the face of formidable odds.[304] The letter goes on to declare "the male academy will service 600 students in grades kindergarten through grade 8 who have been identified as "at-risk."[305]

The proposition of an all-male academy was widely accepted by the Detroit Board of Education. Strongly supported by the previously elected HOPE team, the Male Academy easily passed the board's vote minus the vote of one member.[306] Upon approval of the male academy Watson petitioned Superintendent Porter to name it for Malcolm X and to omit "Male" from the title in anticipation of legal issues. There was some disagreement regarding the name. They initially planned to name the school after 18th century African-American freedom fighter David Walker.[307] "In its acceptance of the [Task Force] report, the Detroit School Board had ruled that the parents, teachers, and students would have the right to name their school. Those who participated in the life of the first male academy decided to call their school "Malcolm X Academy".[308] The Academy opened with a kindergarten-through fifth grade population.[309]

---

[304] Letter composed by Dr. John Porter obtained from the personal papers of Malcolm X Academy Principle Dr. Jeffrey Robinson.

[305] Letter composed by Dr. John Porter obtained from the personal papers of Malcolm X Principle Dr. Jeffrey Robinson.

[306] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 45. "History records that Board member Gloria Cobbin cast the sole negative vote against the proposal."

[307] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution,*44. "From the onset, Superintendent Porter and other Black conservative forces in the administrative hierarchy of the District thought the name "Malcolm X Academy" was to radical. Following a proposal from David Smitherman, the Task Force settled on the name 'David Walker' an ironic compromise.

[308] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution,* 45.

[309] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy* Solution, 60.

The school was also designated as "an Empowered School." Empowered Schools function autonomously within the public school sector, but are still bound by the legal policies of the district and the state."[310] The Malcolm X Academy, Detroit's first Male Academy was established early in 1991. According to a *Detroit News* article Detroit's all-male academy already had a waiting list of 150 families who saw the experiment as an opportunity for quality education.[311] By the summer the overwhelming demand for educational programs for the sons of the Detroit community led to the school board's decision to create two additional male academies: the Paul Robeson and Marcus Garvey academies.[312] By May 1991, after a personnel search throughout Detroit's 248 public schools had been conducted, three candidates had applied. The announcement of the selected candidates was expected the following week.[313] Although it was not clear when the announcement was made, a *Detroit Free Press* article dated July 2, 1991, identified the directors of the three proposed male academies and where they would work. Clifford Watson would direct Malcolm X Academy to be housed in the Woodward Elementary School, Ray Johnson at Paul Robeson Academy at the Cooper Elementary School and Harvey Hambrick whose program would operate in the closed Marxhausn Building (Marcus

---

[310] Although empowered schools have autonomy and must operate within certain district parameters. It is free to design its own curriculum, determine its yearly calendar, select its own staff, and manage its own financial affairs (subject to Board oversight).Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution P.42

[311] Staff, *Detroit News* Article "Waiting list Grows for all-boys school" p. 1

[312] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 43.

[313] Staff, *Michigan Chronicle* Article entitled "DPS set to name Principal of male Academy" dated 5-22-91 p. 1A

Garvey).[314] The Board also scheduled in-service training and orientation for prospective teachers in the male academies during the same summer.[315]

The Academy would be fraught with challenges. Three months after its approval on March 26, 1991, Porter received a letter from the National Organization for Women (NOW) raising objections about plans to open academies solely for African-American males.[316] NOW raised two concerns--that Detroit was establishing schools for the purpose of single sex education that would use public funds to discriminate against females and that the curriculum of the proposed academy was racist.[317]

To assess the legal status of the academies Dr. Porter retained Wayne State University Law professor Robert Sedler as the Board's legal consultant. Sedler agreed with the Task Force that the long list of problems facing Detroit's male students urgently demanded the creation of some alternative to Detroit's existing educational programs.[318] NOW's second claim, regarding racist curriculum was perceived as a "gross distortion, and profound lack of understanding about African-centered education."[319] It was supported by the claim that "African-centered education

---

[314] Staff, *Detroit Free Press* Article entitled "Directors named for male schools: 3 programs to start in Detroit this fall", July 2, 1991 p. 3. A

[315] Larry Owens, "Academy Seeks applicants for Fall" *Michigan Chronicle,* 6-19-25, 1991,1. This reference was also indicated in" DPS Announcement of Instructional Positions at the Male Academy" dated April 17, 1991

[316] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution,* 46-7.

[317] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 46-7.

[318] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 47.

[319] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 48.

is an effort to reach Black students by relocating the centuries-old dislocated African in America." Although the board appeared to stand on solid ground in their position, NOW and the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit against the DPS. On August 5, 1991, the case of *Nancy Doe, et al. v. The Detroit Board of Education of the School District of the City of Detroit* was filed. Several integrationist organizations supported the lawsuit against the Detroit Board of Education.[320] Although Attorney Sedler and the Board's law firm-Lewis, Whit and Clay appeared to have a solid case, Judge George Woods ruled against DPS on August 15, 1991, granting a preliminary injunction that delayed the opening of Detroit's three male academies for three weeks.[321] Community groups and coalitions were formed and met on a regular basis to mount their protest campaigns and organize a citywide effort to effectively defeat NOW's legal victory.[322] The efforts of the Detroit community appeared to have worked. On November 7, 1991 Judge Woods dismissed the action which had been brought by NOW and the ACLU against the school board after board members and the plaintiffs reached a settlement agreeing that "the Academies admit girls such that each would have a 30 % population."[323]

During its second year of operation Malcolm X Academy had additional challenges. It was decided at the end of the first academic year (June 1992) that the school would be relocated

---

[320] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution,* 48. "Further, some segments of the Civil Rights Community, both privately and publicly, took a position against the Male Academy. Traditionally integrationist in their approach to Black Liberation, some Civil Rights activist argued that a Male Academy, unlike the segregated schools of the Old South did not evolve from racist and unequal educational opportunities." 48.

[321] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 48.

[322] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 50.

[323] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 49.

to Leslie Elementary School which was located in the predominantly white neighborhood of Warrendale. Warrendale residents were outraged at the prospect of an African-centered school named Malcolm X Academy opening in their community. Their outrage was reflected in a *Detroit Free Press* article dated July 7, 1992. "Fears about crime, property values--even the name Malcolm X Academy have set a largely white, far west side neighborhood on edge at the prospect of a mostly black, African-centered public elementary school opening there in the fall," the article stated.[324] Warrendale, residents organized several grassroots organizations. The Warrendale Community Organization (WCO), which tried to work collaboratively with DPS officials to quell concerns and promote understanding.[325]

The WCO President Yvonne Hicks requested a meeting with DPS Superintendent Debra McGriff, Clifford Watson (Malcolm X Academy principal) of Malcolm X and the Warrendale residents. An August 4, 1992 article reported that "An informal meeting designed to soothe a predominantly white neighborhood's opposition to an African-centered elementary school instead inflamed residents and brought McGriff to tears."[326] The article reported that "over 500 Warrendale residents attended the meeting at Warrendale United Brethren Church" and that some of those present said "the academy would make Warrendale unsafe for their children, hurt property values and scare white people out of the neighborhood."[327] Residents expressed fears associated with the Black activist Malcolm X for whom the academy is named. Paul Lee, a

---

[324] Brenda Gilchrist, "Neighbors worry about Malcolm X School Move," *Detroit Free Press*, July 30, 1992 1A. and 13A.

[325] Brenda Gilchrist, Neighbors worry about Malcolm X School Move" *Detroit Free Press*, July 30, 1992 by 1A. and 13A.

[326] Seth Anuradha, "Go Home Malcolm X neighbors tell McGriff" *Detroit News*, 1A, date unknown

[327] Seth Anuradha, "Go Home Malcolm X neighbors tell McGriff" *Detroit News*, 1a.,

Malcolm X scholar said "several misconceptions regarding the Malcolm X's philosophy have remained entrenched since his assassination."[328] Lee's assertion was evident in comments by a Warrendale resident who said, "I don't like the name." He said, Malcolm X 'was a racist he was a separatist. He looked at whites as his enemies and preached this continuously."[329] According to an article in the *Michigan Chronicle*, "One man-sitting on a porch across from the school – went so far as to say that if the name Malcolm X is placed on the building that he would take it down himself."[330]

The residents complained of bias in the school selection process. They claimed that Carver Elementary School, located in the same neighborhood, suffered from over-crowding and should have had the first opportunity to occupy the school.[331] There was no evidence found supporting their claim. It must be noted that there were some white Warrendale residents in favor of the academy. One even attended the academy. An August 14, 1992 *Detroit News* article reported "some white residents of Detroit's Warrendale community are asking their neighbors to put support of the controversial academy in writing. In a bid to change their

---

[328] Eddie Allen Jr., "Changing perceptions of Malcolm X", *Detroit News*, 2a, quote from Paul Lee

[329] Eddie Allen Jr.,"Changing perceptions of Malcolm X" *Detroit News,*2a

[330] Stephen Briscoe, "Malcolm X Academy site Challenged" *Michigan Chronicle,*1a August 5-11, 1992

[331] Brenda J. Gilchrist, "Academy to stay despite tension" *Detroit Free Press,*1b "Many residents in Warrendale have said the issue is not racism but overcrowding at another area school, Carver Elementary. They would rather see Leslie reopened to neighborhood children. However, Carver's Principal said Wednesday the claim of overcrowding is unfounded."

neighborhood's image, two groups have inspired a petition drive they hope will show that most residents don't harbor racially motivated opposition to the Malcolm X Academy."[332]

There was also a Polish American male named Bruce Bastuba who attended the school the same year. The students mother Bonnie Bastuba explained that her son had matured since attending the school, that his grade point average improved from 1.9 to 2.9 and "his reading level was much better. He's more interested in spelling. He likes Spanish he got a B on a paper."[333]

In the midst of virulent and seemingly racist opponents, families, parents and supporters of Malcolm X Academy met the opposition head on. A *Detroit News* article dated August 11, 1992 reported that "parents at Detroit's Malcolm X Academy, concerned about their children's safety, will meet Wednesday [the following day] to decide whether to seek a new location for the school set to open in a mostly white neighborhood."[334] The academy parents and Kwame Kenyatta, chairperson of the school's Local School Community Organization's (LSCO) said that the purpose of the meeting was to "get a consensus on whether parents want to move or dig in and make the academy secure for our children."[335] Kenyatta said that the parents would be asked to join security patrols if they decided to stay. The *Detroit Free Press* reported on August 13, 1992 that "after a 90 minute meeting at Woodward Elementary School" Malcolm X Academy parents said "this is where we are, and this is where we will stay." A vote was held and of the 92 of the 139 participants voted in favor of retaining the location and 47 voted against. The parents also voted that they would keep the name and the curriculum intact. They formed

---

[332] Ron Russell, "Malcolm X Academy draws white neighborhood support" *Detroit News,* 11-14-92 ,1b

[333] Staff, "A pupil who stands out manages to fit right in" *Detroit Free Press,* July 19, 1993., 7a

[334] Ron Russell, "Parents to discuss moving academy site" *Detroit News,* 8-11-92,, 1b.

[335] Ron Russell, "Parents to discuss moving academy site" *Detroit News,* 8-11-92, 1b

security patrols and invited Warrendale residents to help promote a peaceful transition.[336] Despite racist resistance and a four-week teacher strike, the academy opened in its new location on September 30, 1992.[337] Although the school opened as planned it would be plagued with problems during its stay at the Warrendale location. "The long-delayed start of the school year came Tuesday with police, security officers and parents bracing for trouble that never materialized at Detroit's Malcolm X Academy that day," according to a *Detroit Free Press* report dated September 19, 1992.[338] A few opposing residents, however, picketed outside the school on opening day. During the 1992-93 school year the school opened in the midst of "swastikas painted on the school door, dogs sniffing for bombs and helicopters flying overhead." Reportedly, "during the winter, a lawsuit was filed claiming the school was teaching religion and in the spring teachers reported shots fired at students practicing on the baseball field." [339] A *Detroit News* article reported that school board members called for removing the Malcolm X Academy from Warrendale since racial tension remained high. There had reportedly been at least one bomb threat and knowledge of "Klan activities in and around the Warrendale area as it relates to the academy."[340]

---

[336] Brenda Gilchrist, "Academy to Stay Despite tension" Detroit Free Press, 8-13-92, p.1.B

[337], Debra Adams and Margaret Trimer-Harley, "First Day delights most" *Detroit Free Press,* September 19, 1992. 1b

[338] Debra Adams and Margaret Trimer-Harley, "First Day delights most" *Detroit Free Press*., September 19, 1992. 1b.

[339] Debra Adams, "Malcolm X prides itself on high marks in an uneasy year" *Detroit Free Press* ., July 7, 1993. 1A

[340] Ron Russell, "Board may move school 'out of harm's way," *Detroit News*, February 9, 1993. 1a.

During the spring of 1993, parents asked the board to remove the school from Warrendale after shots were reportedly fired as 20 students played on the school grounds.[341] After several hearings and meetings between the school board and parents it was decided in early June that Malcolm X Academy would "stay at least one more year in its building in the mostly white Warrendale neighborhood on Detroit's far West side."[342]

Threats of violence continued during that year and in October 1995 there was a report of gunfire at a school bus occupied by the academy students.[343] In March, 1996 shots were reportedly fired into the school.[344] The Malcolm X Academy relocated to the Ruth Ruff Adult Education site at Livernois and Grand River where it remained from September 1996 until 2003 when it moved to the former Foreign Language Immersion School at Martin Luther King and John C. Lodge and remained until June 2009. The academy relocated and merged with the Paul Robeson Academy housed at Fenkell and Linwood.[345]

The Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and Paul Robeson academies opened in September of 1991,

---

[341] Heidi Mae Bratt, "Board will hear pleas to move Malcolm X" *Detroit News. Date unknown,* 3b.

[342] Staff, "Malcolm X school to stay- for now" *Detroit News* June 9, 1993. Quote from Detroit Public School Superintendent Debra McGriff p. 1.B

[343] Staff, "No one reported shooting of city school bus, parents say" *Detroit News.* October 19, 1995. "Parents of students at Malcolm X Academy say their children were on a bus that was peppered by gunshots Tuesday, but no one notified the school principal or Detroit Police." p.2.D

[344] Joan Richardson, "School Wants out of harm's way" *Detroit Free Press,* March 15, 1996, 1.b.

[345] Dr. Jeffrey Robison, interview by author, Detroit, MI., October 20, 2010

and the empowered status of the schools allowed the principals more autonomy to determine their own path rather than being determined by a central administration.[346]

While a dearth of information exists regarding the Marcus Garvey and Paul Robeson Academies, the focus will be on the development of the Malcolm X Academy which served as the flagship of the efforts to establish African-centered schools within the district. To provide an understanding of the African-centered mission, philosophy, and curriculum of the male academies, the next section draws upon the work of Malcolm X Academy founder Clifford Watson, and Michigan State University Distinguished Professor Geneva Smitherman as indicated in the Male Academy proposal and the text *Educating African-American Males.*

The Mission

The mission and goals asserted in the Male Academy proposal is to provide high-quality educational experiences which result in certainty of opportunities for target students in employment and advanced education. It will also test whether or not such an intervention will reduce risks associated with failure.[347] The document further declares "the Academy program will stress, emphatically, the development of a proud sense of self, high expectations, appropriate levels of demand, and multiple opportunities for success. The curriculum will be Afrocentric, futuristic, linguistic and pragmatic with the emphasis upon civic and social responsibility."[348] Watson and Smitherman provide additional clarity regarding the "Afrocentric" emphasis in the mission. "The mission of the Malcolm X Academy grows out of its grounding in the pedagogy

---

[346] Staff, article dated 5-22-91 entitled "DPS set to name principal of male academy" *Michigan Chronicle* p.1. A

[347] Male Academy Proposal presented to Detroit Board of Education by Task Force December 1990, p. 12 Document was retrieved from the personal papers of Dr. Jeffrey Robinson.

[348] Male Academy Proposal presented to Detroit Board of Education by Task Force December 1990, p. 12 Document was retrieved from the personal papers of Dr. Jeffrey Robinson

that has come to be known as 'African Immersion," or "Afrocentricity." Simply stated, "African-centered education approaches knowledge from the perspective of Africa as the origin of human civilization and the descendants of Africans as subjects, rather than objects, of history and scientific observation. While focus is on African and African-American culture, the pedagogy is multicultural and includes study of people of all groups in the historical and cultural presence of the United States and the world."[349] The goals of the Male Academy include "five desirable conditions: motivated students, dedicated teachers, enthusiastic support personnel, concerned parents and a supportive community."[350]

Also identified are six objectives for academy students:

1 beginning to learn to read in pre-school

2 exposure to computer technology

3 [the] study of Kiswahili, Spanish, and French

4 participation in vocational technology,

5 placement in accelerated programs

6 No student will experience failure.[351]

Philosophy

The Malcolm X Academy's African-centered philosophy, according to Watson and Smitherman, could "influence the attitudes, behavior, and education of Black students, that the pedagogy was grounded in the human need for identity, purpose, and knowledge of self, that

[349] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, 55.

[350] Male Academy Proposal presented to Detroit Board of Education by Task Force December 1990, p. 13 Document was retrieved from the personal papers of Dr. Jeffrey Robinson

[351] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, p. 58-9.

speaks to the needs of the total child, linking the school and the educational process to the community and the real world."[352] Watson and Smitherman also state that the "Academy's philosophy is to fit the curriculum to the child and to create a school climate that deals with the whole child-mentally, emotionally, and cognitively."[353] The DPS Social Studies Core Curriculum Outcomes and Objectives outline other aspects of African-centered thought which contributed to the curriculum. The Detroit School District incorporated the Nguzo Saba or seven principals of Kwanzaa, and four of the principals of Maat in its social studies curriculum. The Nguzo Saba was implemented as the Core Cultural Values[354] and the principals of Maat[355] were implemented as suggested criteria for reviewing educational textbooks and materials.

Curriculum

The Task Force's proposed curriculum was comprised of the Core Curriculum, Curriculum Principals, Learning Cycles, and Rites of Passage. The Core Curriculum included Language Arts, Mathematics and Science Education, World Studies, Health and Physical Education and Arts Education.[356] The authors identified six principals that were designed to aid the curriculum and instructions. The principals are: Afrocentricity, Futuristic, Linguistic, Civic,

---

[352] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, p. 94.

[353] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution*, p.60

[354] DPS Social Studies Core Curriculum Outcomes and Objectives p.5-6 Heading (unpublished)

[355] Detroit Public School Social Studies Core Curriculum Outcomes and Objectives, *Suggested Criteria For Reviewing Educational Textbooks and Materials.* "The content of Social Studies Core Curriculum Outcomes and Objectives must be bias-free and multicultural as well as reflect the principals of truth, balance, order and harmony.

[356] Male Academy Proposal, p. 27

Holistic, and Pragmatic.[357] The curriculum organized the students in learning cycles based on corresponding grade levels. The levels were: Cycle 1-Kindergarten, Cycle 2--grades 1 and 2, Cycle 3--grades 3 through 5 and Cycle 4--grades 6 through 8. The goals and learning objectives for each cycle were designed to teach students to think critically, master appropriate skills, test successfully, develop healthy lifestyles and become active, responsible citizens.[358]

The strongly emphasized rites of passage program was designed to "prepare boys to be men."[359] The curriculum organized the program into 9 categories or rites: Personal, Spiritual, Economic, Emotional, Physical, Mental, Social, Historical, and Cultural.[360] Watson and Smitherman said that the goals of the academy curriculum were to "create students who will achieve academic excellence, while developing ethnic awareness, pride, and high self-esteem."[361] They also expressed that administrators, teachers, and parents were met with the challenge of "a dearth of texts and teaching material that are age-appropriate and pedagogically grounded in Afrocentricity."[362]

"The fundamental strategy for correcting the blatantly biased character of the core texts is infusion, either through the use of supplemental texts (though these are few in number), or through the incorporation of research from academic sources which requires the development of lesson plans that "translate" such material to the elementary school level," according to the

---

[357] Male Academy Proposal, p. 27-28
[358] Male Academy Proposal, p. 29-30
[359] Male Academy Proposal, p. 31
[360] Male Academy Proposal, p. 32-34
[361] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy's Solution, p. 58.*
[362] Watson and Smitherman, Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution, p. 60.

authors.[363] Watson and Smitherman's comments suggest that there was no written African-centered curriculum in use by the academies when they opened. Furthermore, the authors expressed that the Malcolm X Academy staff had expended great effort to develop age and grade appropriate African-centered curriculum materials, and that in order to impart an African-centered curriculum to public school students required that teachers develop their own materials.[364] By 1994 the Detroit School District had immersed an African-centered strand within its social studies curriculum.[365]

Parental/Community Involvement

The African proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child," was reflected in the creation and educational process of the academy where the parental and community involvement was an integral part of the school's development. The Local School Community Organization (LSCO) was the school's main vehicle for this participation. Watson and Smitherman suggested that the parental involvement at the Malcolm X Academy was higher than most urban schools, due to a covenant parents were expected to sign. The covenant required that parents agree to serve three hours a month in school activities. Parents, many who frequently exceeded the minimum, assisted as hall monitors, tutors and chaperones on field trips.[366] The academy also

---

[363] Watson and Smitherman, Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution, p.61.

[364] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: Detroit's Malcolm X Academy Solution,* P.62

[365] This document was referenced in preceding sections of this chapter and will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion sections of this work.

[366] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution.* 77.

conducted monthly seminars designed to educate parents on the importance and significance of African-centered education.[367]

The academy operated several extra-curricular programs which included a comprehensive athletic program, the Nguzo Saba, and a mentorship and a rites of passage program. African and African-centered rituals and holidays were also celebrated and observed.

The Academy drew upon the fact that most African-American youth are heavily influenced by athletes as role models. Rather than dismiss the interest of the schools major population the academy was the only "Detroit elementary school to participate in a competitive, comprehensive athletic program-basketball, baseball, and track teams. Student athletes were required to maintain a 2.5 grade point average and a 1 or 2 in citizenship to maintain eligibility to participate in the academy's athletic programs."[368]

In an effort to sustain the school's mission to save African-American males, Smitherman conceived a mentorship program called "My Brother's Keeper." Inspired by Watson's work, Smitherman introduced the program in 1991.[369] The school recruited African-American students from Michigan State University (MSU) to serve as mentors. The mentors primarily worked with the academy students on Saturdays, took them on field trips and organized other

---

[367] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution.* 77.

[368] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution.* 72.

[369] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution.* 74.

activities. Academy students also had annual weeklong visits with their mentors on the MSU campus.[370]

The rites of passage program ran for nine months and was for boys and girls in Grade 7 and sessions were held for two hours during the school day and three hours on Saturdays. The session components were: manhood responsibility, self -identity and personality formation; drill team for disciplined training with a cultural motif; tie-dye; family tree research; and field trips.[371] The students were also required to learn the Nguzo Saba and demonstrate its application. They were also taught community responsibility through community outreach programs.[372]

In an effort to "balance the distortions Black youth are exposed to outside school",[373] The academy started two African-centered celebrations to replace the traditional American holidays of Thanksgiving and Halloween. The Umoja Karamu[374] a feast of Thanksgiving, celebrating Black family and community unity was adopted by the academy.[375] An Afrocentric response to Halloween was an All Saints Day of recognition which focused and celebrated

---

[370] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution*. 75.
[371] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution*. 76.
[372] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution*. 76.
[373] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution*. 71.
[374] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution*. 77. The Umoja Karamu unity feast was "conceived by Mr. Edward Simms, Jr. of Philadelphia and observed at Richard Allen City in Philadelphia, and at Banneker Village in Washington, later the same year (Barashango, 1979 52).
[375] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution.* 70.

traditional African and African-American heroes was adopted.[376] Finally, the Malcolm X Academy conducted an annual Kwanzaa celebration with the intention to "celebrate the African-American cultural heritage, Black family, and community unity."[377]

Detroit Public School Framework and Definition of African-centered education

In 1992, the Framework and Definition for African-centered education was published in two editions. The first edition was published in February and revised in March. This document appears to present a framework for the operation of the African-centered academies and the implementation of African-centered education within the DPS. The Framework and Definition was clearly composed and introduced during the tenure of the previously discussed Detroit Board of Education HOPE team, and School Superintendent Debra McGriff. The document also names the African-Centered Academies Implementation Task Force as being responsible for the creation of the documents. Task force members were Arthur M. Carter, William Aldridge, Catherine Blackwell, Barbara Coulter, Harvey Hambrick, Schylbea Hopkins, Ray Johnson, Sharon Johnson-Lewis, Ronald N. Kar, Kay Lovelace, Rayona Patrick, Beverly Schneider, Otis Stanley, Clifford Watson, Pamela Wilkins and members of the Coalition to Support African-centered Education.[378] The preface states that the purpose of the African-centered academies, which is "to focus on the critical, multiple, needs of urban students as well as to provide an

[376] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution.* 72.
[377] Watson and Smitherman, *Educating African-American Males: The Detroit Malcolm X Academy's Solution.* 72.
[378] Final page (unnumbered) of the Document entitled The Framework and Definition For African-Centered Education.

education anchored in historical truth and cultural balance."[379] The document further states that the

> The African-Centered Academies are empowered and will (1) have discretion over curriculum, instruction and other school activities; (2) have control over the allocation of the school's budget, personnel and resources; (3) use the creativity and talent to design effective school programs; and (4) be accountable for the schools program with the most important result being student learning.[380]

Additional sections of the document are: Definition, Introduction, Curriculum and Training (two Cooperative/Collaborative subsections) Learning and Language Proficiency, Instructional Principals for Teachers and Mentors, Parent and Community Involvement, Glossary, African-centered Folktales and Essential Readings for African-centered Education. There were 9 outlined goals and four basic areas of the DPS Framework and Definition For African-centered Education. The goals called for:

1 Students to understand that all humans originated on the continent of Africa and that all humans are related genetically

2 Students to perform academically at grade level or above

3 Students to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct

4 Students to demonstrate health self-concepts

5 Students to be academically prepared to succeed in any other educational setting upon leaving the Academy

6 Teachers to become masters teachers of the African-centered education philosophy

7 Teachers to demonstrate competent, creative, and motivating strategies for student

[379] The Framework and Definition For African-Centered Education. P.2

[380] The Framework and Definition for African-Centered Education p.2

learning.[381]

8 Parents to actively participate in the African-centered education of their child

9 Community members to actively participate in Academy development and activities

The four basic areas were:

1 Rituals and Ceremonies Curriculum (a. Cooperative/Collaborative)

2 Learning French as Second language

3 Mentoring and Guidance

4 Parental and Community Involvement.[382]

African-centered Education Resolution

Community activist and current Detroit City Council member Kwame Kenyatta was elected as Detroit's first African-centered school board member during the November 1992 election. The following year, February 2, 1993, board members passed a resolution supporting the system-wide adoption of African-centered education philosophy throughout the Detroit Public School System. The resolution has an introduction, overview and four key points:

1. The students of the DPS are entitled to an education and curriculum based on truth, balance, order, harmony and reciprocity
2. Detroit students must be centered in their own historical and cultural heritage which fosters a positive self-esteem, develops group identity, and provides for entrepreneurial activities which encourage collective work and responsibility.

---

[381] Final page (unnumbered) of the Document entitled The Framework and Definition For African-Centered Education. P.3

[382] Final page (unnumbered) of the Document entitled The Framework and Definition For African-Centered Education. P.3

3. The DPS must therefore ensure that the entire curriculum enable Detroit Public School Students to develop knowledge and understanding leading to an appreciation of their own heritage/cultural and a respect for cultural diversity.
4. Detroit Public School must provide the means to coordinate the development and implementation of the curriculum as well as provide for the continuing research of content to ensure the truth, balance, order, harmony and reciprocity for students, parents, staff and the community at large.

Furthermore the document states that the DPS general superintendent directs the staff to:

1. Develop procedures and guidelines for textbook selection
2. Review all textbooks and instructional materials to ensure that they are accurate complete and free of stereotypical views of any group whether expressed or implied by statement, visual image or by omission
3. Develop supplementary material when textbooks and other commercially available
4. materials fail to meet the guidelines for comprehensive and accurate instruction

Finally the resolution mandates that the General Superintendent direct the DPS staff to develop a comprehensive African-centered education program.[383]

The Indaba

The Indaba Salons were another important activity. The term *Indaba*, which has origins in the language of the South African Zulu ethnic group means "intense discussion." The Indaba

[383] Afrikan-Centered Resolution: DPS authored by Detroit School Board member Kwame Kenyatta presented and adopted by the Detroit Board of Education February 2, 1993. This document appears in throughout several Detroit Public school documents and websites. This reference was adopted from Kwame Kenyatta's text Guide To Implementing Afrikan-Centered Education published in Detroit, Michigan in 1998 by Afrikan Way investments.

emphasizes lengthy, spirited discourse through a debate process, stressing the power of reasoning.[384] During the months of February through July and during the years 1993 and 1994, 153 representatives of the school district and Detroit community convened to discuss historical events and other issues. The participants were charged with creating a common knowledge base and developing guiding principles that concentrated on "viewing, reviewing, and correcting" written information used in the textbooks and curriculum guides.[385] National scholars were selected to facilitate group discussions at the Indabas each year and provide research-based information on the major issues. DPS administrator Dr. Kay Lovelace convened the Indabas and the contributing scholars were professors Molefi Asante and Leonard Jeffries, along with Anthony Browder and Kwame Kenyatta. Contributing writers and facilitators were Dahia Shabaka, Carl Barret, Marie Bradley, Michele Brown-Fletcher, Anthony Houston, D. Mzee Nabawi, K. Chaka Nantambu and Nathan Simpson.

The Indaba participants identified several issues that were critical to creating an African-centered education philosophy. The issues were: defining African-centered and Afrocentric education, establishing a common knowledge base, recognition and elimination of destructive myths of African culture, recognition and elimination of unacceptable concepts, words and ideas, and an explanation of infusion, multicultural and other terms.[386] What emerged from the committee discussions became the formulation of seven Indaba Principle that became the foundation of the African-centered philosophy adopted by the DPS.

---

[384] Symposium Book March 7-8 1997

[385] Symposium Book March 7-8 1997

[386] Document entitled the Indaba Copy written August 1994 by the DPS obtained from the office of Social Studies of the DPS.

The Indaba Principals are:

1. Time and Place, which is essential to provide a framework for accurate comprehensive study of humankind to reflect the universal development of cultures
2. Diaspora--the population of the earth by indigenous Africans through a planned or circumstantial movement from the African continent 250,000 years ago. This principal affirms that the oldest human fossil remains were discovered in Tanzania in East Africa and that scientific studies validate the African continent as the birthplace of humankind
3. Cleansing--serves as a corrective effort to eliminate myths, stereotypes, images,
4. pejorative and negative expressions perpetuated in curriculum written from a
5. European perspective.
6. Maafa*[387] refers to the devastation and scattering of indigenous people through captivity and enslavement worldwide.
7. Commission/Omission-Commission is the deliberate distortions and historical misperception passed on as historical facts. Omission is the act of deliberately leaving out information pertaining to non-European groups. Commission/Omission also reinforces the false notions of European superiority and the equally false notion of African inferiority
8. Deconstruction/Reconstruction/Self-Determination—Deconstruction was the process used to identify persons, ideas, and institutions responsible for the deliberate construction, glorification and elevation of European culture and

[387] Maafa- Kiswahili term which means great disaster.

history to the detriment of Africans as well as other non-European groups. Deconstruction/Reconstruction/ Self-Determination is the process of developing critical and creative thinking through the acquisition and analysis of the historical experiences of one's own group.

Conclusion

The Independent/Public phase of the CIACEM gave way to the adoption of African-centered education philosophy within the DPS. The collective efforts of Detroit community activists, teachers, administrators and the broader Detroit community, advanced the evolution of the DPS's participation in the CIACEM. The various efforts to implement African-centered education philosophy within the DPS during the Independent/ Public phase resulted in the institutionalization of African-centered education philosophical concepts within the DPS. This accomplishment was not only precedent setting; it also presented philosophical and ideological challenges for the existing independent African-centered schools and the broader CIACEM.

Chapter 4

The Public Phase 1994-2000

The Public Period of the CIACEM is characterized by the decision of the leadership of Detroit's independent African-centered schools Aisha Shule and the Nsoroma Institute to transition from independent and private schools to public/charter schools. Aisha Shule's leadership introduced the prospect of making the transition to a charter school to the leadership body of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) which initiated a discourse within the organization that persisted for five years. The prospect of CIBI schools possibly becoming chartered posed philosophical and ideological implications for the CIBI organization and the larger African-centered education movement. Aisha Shule became chartered in 1994, followed by Nsoroma Institute in 1997. The actions of the formerly independent African-centered schools challenged CIBI with disorder and confusion that played out in a series of public debates and a philosophical and ideological split within the organization. In April 1998, after five years of debate, the various factions reached a compromise allowing the schools to remain within the organization. By 1999 Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute resigned from the CIBI.

The resignation was significant in that it ended the era of independent African-centered schools in Detroit and challenged CIBI's existing definition of African-centered education. This chapter briefly examines the inception of charter schools in Michigan, the process and decisions made by Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute to adopt charter school status and the challenges that emerged within both schools, CIBI and the CIACEM at the local and national levels.

Charter Schools

African centered scholar Dr. Jelani Williams defines a charter school as a public school that delivers public education using public dollars organized by individuals, parents, teachers,

communities, and organizations, in response to perceived needs.[388] The earliest legislation endorsing charter schools was enacted in Minnesota in 1991. By 2002, charter school legislation had been enacted in 38 states and charter schools continue to be one of the fastest growing education reforms.[389] Charter school legislation was first enacted in Michigan in 1993.[390] In Michigan, a public school academy or charter school is an independent public school organized as a non-profit organization, funded on a per-pupil basis from the state aid fund and operated under a contract issued by an authorizing body.[391] Authorizing bodies in Michigan include boards of local and intermediate school districts, community colleges and the state's public universities.

According to the *Western Michigan University Evaluation Center on Charter Schools Report* published in 1999, the four classifications of the new charter schools are as follows: converted private schools, converted public schools, "mom and pop" schools and franchise or "cookie cutter" schools.[392] Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute fit the first category of converted private schools. Moreover, "the schools are free to determine their own governing structures which include parents and teachers as active members. In all these configurations, autonomy

---

[388] Lorenzo "Jelani" Williams *"*An Africalogical Examination of the Contemporary Charter School Movement" (doctoral dissertation, Temple University Page, 2001), 104.

[389] National Center for the Study of Privatization of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, April 2002 Charter Schools in California, Michigan and Arizona: An Alternative Framework For Policy Analysis p. 2

[390] Occasional Paper series, paper No. 40 *Charter Schools in Californian, Michigan, and Arizona: An alternative Framework For Policy Analysis* authored by Janelle T. Scott and Margaret B. Barber, Published for the National Center for the study of Privatization of Education, P. 4

[391] Irma Clark, "There is simply no one best way to educate our children" *Michigan Chronicle,* July 11, 2001. 7a.

[392] Irma Clark, "There is simply no one best way to educate our children." *Michigan Chronicle,* July 11, 2001. 7a.

gives charter schools the flexibility to allocate their budgets; hire staff and create educational programs with curriculum, pedagogy, organizational structures and ways of involving parents and community members that may not be typical to their neighboring schools."[393]

The Michigan Department of Education website states that "charter schools may include grades K-12 or any combination of those grades. They may not charge tuition and must serve anyone who applies to attend; that is that they may not screen out students based on race, religion, sex or test scores. Students are selected randomly for admission if the number of students applying exceeds the school's enrollment capacity. Charter school teachers must be certified and highly qualified; charter students are assessed annually as part of the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP). Charter schools cannot be religiously affiliated."[394]

Aisha Shule/W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy

Aisha Shule was the first of Detroit's African-centered schools to obtain charter school status. Imani Humphrey the principal explained that in the early 1990s she began to receive inquiries regarding the prospect of the school converting to a charter school. Reflecting on these conversations Humphrey explained:

> Parents were very concerned. They were very interested because they wouldn't have to pay tuition. And they said, 'Yes,' if we could do the same things, have the same curriculum, etc., they would go for it . . . And the parents whose children were going into the prep school and high school said they really wanted to do that because they were starting to look at college tuition for their children… and paying tuition and trying to save for them to go to college was a real

---

[393] U.S. Department of Education, Office of innovation and Improvement, *Innovations in Education: Successful Charter Schools* Washington, D.C. June 2004, p.3 www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/scs/full_print.htm

[394] Michigan Department of Education Website Titled Charter Public Schools p.1 www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334_40088---,00.html

> hardship…they wanted to continue to support the school but were thinking they were going to have to send their kids to public school for high school.[395]

During an interview with longtime parent and board member Beverly Greenwood of the Aisha Shule, Greenwood said, "I thought it was a good decision. One of my beefs was, you know . . . I pay taxes and I pay you know into the school millage, so on and so forth, but I have to pay extra tuition to educate my child in a way that I feel is in their interest. So when the opportunity arose to still have them at the Shule and not have to pay tuition, I was for that."[396]

The Aisha Shule family viewed the prospect of obtaining the charter as an opportunity to reach more students than they were able to as a tuition-based school. After numerous discussions and training session for the Aisha Shule administration, staff and parents Aisha Shule became a charter school in 1994.[397] The school received offers from several charter authorizing agencies to issue their initial charter. The leadership selected the Detroit Board of Education to become its charter authorizer. Aisha Shule became one of the first of eight schools in the state to obtain charter status.

The new status of the Aisha school resulted in two new challenges. One pertained to the legality of charter schools which was short lived. The second was ideological and philosophical challenges which were more complex. Within the first year that Aisha Shule became a charter school, the legislation approving charter schools was challenged by a lawsuit filed by the teacher's union. A motion was filed by the union for an injunction challenging the legality of the schools. Funding was halted until new legislation was written. "We had told parents that they would no longer have to pay tuition," Humphrey said. "This action pulled the rug out from

---

[395] Imani Humphrey, interview by author, Detroit, MI. April 2, 2010.

[396] Beverly Greenwood, interview by author, Detroit, MI. September, 2003.

[397] Imani Humphrey, interview by author, Detroit, MI. April 2, 2010

under us."[398] The charter was rescinded and the school struggled to keep their doors open during the 1994-95 school year.

The legal challenge was short lived. The Aisha Shule community shifted to communal mode and pulled together their resources to ensure that the school stayed open. "Our core parents, they were good, they said well, they would pay tuition that year. They loaned us money. Some of us got mortgages. We just did whatever we could to keep the school going. And then there were some emergency allocations for these eight schools because all of the schools had done . . . the founders had done the same thing. They mortgaged their homes, took out loans, etc."[399] The leadership of Aisha Shule was able to sustain the school throughout the 1994-95 school-years. The school was re-chartered during the fall of 1995 and has operated as a charter school ever since. In 1996, Aisha Shule expanded to the 12th grade and graduated its first class of high school seniors.

Nsoroma Institute

Nsoroma Institute, like Aisha Shule, began its journey to obtain charter status in 1994. Aba Ifeoma, a former board member and parent, provided a rational for the school's decision to become a charter school.

"The situation was that there were any number of public African-centered schools, [in Detroit], 13, I think, that people could choose from to send their child to and for us to charge tuition and think that people were going to come in numbers-- it just didn't happen," Ifeoma said.[400] Yakini's letter to the CIBI offered additional clarification of the decision to adopt

[398] Imani Humphrey, interview by author, Detroit, MI. April 2, 2010
[399] Imani Humphrey, interview by author, Detroit, Mi. April 2, 2010
[400] Aba Ifeoma, interview by author, Detroit, MI. September 2003

charter status. "The combination of Afrikan-centered public schools and the proliferation of charter schools in the Detroit area provided free options to parents seeking educational alternatives for their children," Yakini wrote. "Very few parents are able and willing to pay $3,000 annually on their child's schooling when so many public-funded options are available. Even the children of most Detroit Black Nationalists and Pan Afrikanists attend public schools. Simply put, deciding to remain a tuition-based institution would have been tantamount to putting a noose around our institutional necks. If it didn't kill us, it would have relegated us to being a small, unstable, institution which was ineffective yet ideologically correct."[401]

Yakini wrote a letter to Highland Park School Superintendent Eugene Cain on January 24, 1994, expressing interest in obtaining charter school status. "We are much interested in becoming a charter school as provided for in Senate Bill 896 signed into law last week by Michigan Governor John Engler. Please provide us with application information," Yakini wrote.[402] Highland Park Board of Education members responded promptly, explaining they had "contacted the Michigan Department of Education" and that there was "no specific implementation plan available for the school district to follow." They advised Yakini to contact Dr. Michael Addonizio to have the schools that were interested in establishing charters schools placed on a mailing list.[403]

---

[401] Letter composed by Malik Yakini address to the Ndundu and Executive Committee members Subject matter: Membership of Charter schools in CIBI dated 3-14-97. P.2

[402] Malik Yakini to the Highland Park School Board expressing interest in obtaining charter school application materials. This letter addressed to Dr. Eugene L. Cain Superintendent of Highland park Schools. It was obtained from Nsoroma Institutes Archives.

[403] Letter addressed February 2, 1994 address to Mr. Malik Yakini from the School District of City of Highland Park.

"There was very little in place regarding the process and procedure available to those entities interested in charter schools," Yakini said during an interview following the passing of the charter school legislation.[404] An inter-office memo from Superintendent Cain supported Yakini's assertion. "Since this is our first formal request by an organization to receive charter school status," Cain wrote, "I am herein requesting that the Board hold a special meeting to fully discuss the aspects of the request."[405] On October 3, 1994, the Nsoroma's request was listed as an item on the school board meeting agenda.[406] There was no indication that any action was taken by the school-board on this matter. In fact, a year later, Winona G. Humphrey of the HPSD District Administrative Center received a brief letter from Yakini dated September 7, 1995.

"As you know, Nsoroma Institute submitted an application to become a charter school to the Highland Park Board of Education last year," Yakini wrote. "This letter is to notify you that we are renewing our request."[407] Yakini wrote several letters to the HPSD. Finally, a letter dated April 22, 1996 from Ms. Humphrey indicated the "Board of Education would allocate 10 minutes for your presentation [Nsoroma Institute's] during the May 14, 1996 meeting."[408]

---

[404] Malik Yakini, interview by author, Detroit, MI. September 2003

[405] Interoffice Meme from the Eugene L. Cain Superintendent of Highland Park School district. Date September 23, 1994 address to members of the board.

[406] School district of the City of Highland Park Special Meeting The Board of Education Trustees Agenda dated October 3, 1994. Motion to approve Nsoroma's request is listed as the 5 item on the agenda. Obtained from Nsoroma Institute Archives.

[407] Malik Yakini to Winona G. Humphrey of the District Administrative Center reiterating the school's interest in obtaining authorization for charter school status by the Highland Park School district.

[408] Letter from Highland Park Board of education President Winona Humphrey dated April 22, 1996. Retrieved from Nsoroma Institute Archives.

During his presentation Yakini requested swift action on two matters.[409] He requested that the board lease the vacant Thomas or Midland school buildings to Nsoroma Institute. He also asked the board to approve a charter for the school. No documents were found indicating that either request was granted. Nsoroma Institute never received a charter from the HPSD nor did they ever occupy any former Highland Park School.

Yakini corresponded with the Highland Park School District for two years regarding authorization for charter school status. He and other Nsoroma Institute supporters engaged in other activities around this matter. According to Nsoroma institute documents as early as May 1995, a charter- planning committee for the school was formed and met on a weekly basis to address issues such as uniforms, charter, financial policies, Hot lunch, board of directors selection, etc.[410] During the summer of 1995 Nsoroma made two additional efforts in the charter application process. A letter dated July 21, 1995 confirmed that the school had "selected Charterhouse Academies Inc, to assist with exploring the opportunity for chartering the Nsoroma Institute."[411] Secondly, Nsoroma Institute selected the law firm of Jaffe, Raitt, Heur & Weiss to counsel and represent them in the chartering process.

---

[409] Photocopy of Malik Yakini's Address before the Highland Park School Board requesting consideration for authorization for charter and to lease on of the board's school buildings. Addressed to the Highland Park Board of Education dated May 14, 1996. 2 pages. Retrieved from Nsoroma Institute's archives.

[410] Document retrieved from Nsoroma Institute archives with heading Planning Committee Meeting Minutes 5-15-1995

[411] Copy of letter addressed to Malik Yakini from Executive Director of Charterhouse Academies, Inc accepting and affirming their agreement to provide charter application services to Nsoroma Institute. Agencies such as Charterhouse provide Charter application services to interested parties such as; a review all document listed in the parties charter proposal, a complete list of all educational components needing revision and/or modification for compliance with charter law, recommended revisions and modification to program components for compliance with law, and completion for application of selected granting authorities. Cited Document.

A letter addressed to Yakini and composed by Lawrence C. Patrick, Jr. on behave of the law firm and dated July 25, 1995 affirmed this agreement and included a list of contracted services.[412] Nsoroma Institute also considered Central Michigan University and other public universities as potential authorizers.[413] In August 1996, the charter school application was approved by Oakland University. The Institute began operating as a charter school in February 1997.[414] The new charter status of Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute brought about new challenges from the CIBI and from within their own institutions.

External Challenges

The preceding section of this chapter discussed the processes that the Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute went through in their quest to become charter schools. Although the communities affiliated with both schools perceived this as a good idea, there were others such as numerous CIBI Ndundu (the Council of Independent Black Institutions leadership body) members, who were surprised by the plans and opposed it. Humphrey and Yakini were members of the Ndundu and were in the process of helping to create criteria for CIBI membership and an African-centered education certification process. Two essential criteria of African-centered education philosophy were independence and funding. Independence is historically one of the founding principles and philosophical pillars of CIBI and the broader African-centered education

---

412 Letter from Lawrence C. Patrick, Jr. composed on behalf of Jaffe, Raitt, Heur & Weiss dated 7-25-1995 confirming the working relationship between Nsoroma Institute and the Law Firm as its Legal Council and Representation. Retrieved from Nsoroma instituted Archives.

413 Letters addressed to Charterhouse Academies Executive Director Ann Amato, expressing interest in authorization by Central Michigan University or other Public Universities, dated June 13, 199

414 Malik Yakini to the Ndundu (the leadership body of the Council of Independent Black institutions address the CIBI Ndundu and Executive Committee Members (executive Committee members. Dated March 14, 1997. Document retrieved from the Nsoroma Institute Archives.

movement. A CIBI document entitled *CIBI Standards for Evaluating Afrikan-centered Educational Institutions* asserts:

> CIBI's evaluation process embodies our commitment to Afrikan-centered education and nation building. Our position is that Afrikan-centered education is the means by which Afrikan culture-including the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to maintain and perpetuate it throughout the nation building process—is developed and advanced through practice. Its aim, therefore, is to build commitment and competency within present and future generations to support the struggle for liberation and nationhood. Nation building is the conscious and focused application of our people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that we identify as ours. Nation building encompasses both the reconstruction of Afrikan culture and the development of a progressive and sovereign state structure consistent with that culture.[415]

The document is organized by 9 criteria and several sub criteria, these criteria include; cultural and ideological content, curriculum, institutional health, staff, finance system, governance, services & community programs, parent involvement, record keeping and physical environment.[416] The crux of the debates which plagued CIBI during this period was item 5.0 Finance Systems, this criteria "refers to the methods and means of acquiring and/or maintaining the human and material resources required to maintain and develop the institution. It encompasses the acquisition, management and investment of the institutions' fiscal resources as well as the planning, procedures and policy making related to these processes. It is a system for collecting, disbursing and prioritizing the use of funds."[417] More specifically it was sub-criteria 5.5 which posed the challenge for the proponents of charters within CIBI. The sub-criteria

---

[415] Document titled CIBI Standards for Evaluating Afrikan-centered Educational Institutions found in the Dr. Heru Hotep's Dissertation "Dedicated to Excellence: An Afrocentric oral history of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1970-2999" pages 216-222

[416] Heru Hotep's, "Dedicated to Excellence p. 225.

[417] Heru Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence: An Afrocentric oral history of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1970—2000" (doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa). 219.

requires that "Evidence exists that the ability to operate is not determined by non-Afrikan sources of funding and that consciousness Pan-Afrikan interest influence institutional decisions about soliciting, accepting and investing funds as well as fundraising activities."[418]

It seemed ironic that both Humphrey and Yakini participated in composing this document as they applied for public school charters. Their advocacy for the charter facilitated a period of turbulence and disruption within CIBI and divided the organization along ideological and philosophical lines. At the heart of the debate was the issue of independence. The discourse regarding the charter school issue within CIBI was first raised "at the 1994 CIBI National Convention in Baton Rouge where Humphrey, Aisha Shule's director was a presenter at a workshop on charter schools and other public policy issues. The workshop initiated the discourse and debate regarding the presence of charter schools within CIBI, which persisted from 1994 to 1999.

The first opposing view, according to Yakini came from the Afrikan People's Action School (APAS) Board of Trustees, who wrote a letter to the CIBI Ndundu and the EXCO.[419] APAS's letter stated that "one of our CIBI Institutions (which we hold in high regards as a leader, and an institution to emulate) proudly state that they have opted to accept outside aid as its primary source." And "that our strongest concern is that going the way of a charter totally contradicts all the principles we teach daily in our institutions, primarily the principle of

[418] Heru Hotep, "Dedicated to Excellence: An Afrocentric oral history of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1970—2000" (doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa). 220

[419] Letter from African People's Action School to the Executive Committee of CIBI, November 18, 1996.

UJAMAA (Cooperative Economics)."[420] Yakini wrote a letter (dated 2/23/99) to Mwalimu Shujaa who was the executive officer of CIBI at the time. "For more than two years there has been an intense debate within CIBI on membership of charter schools and of the organization's definition of independence," Yakini wrote. His letter provides a chronology of the discourse from November 1997 through January 1999:

1. In November 1997 a conference was held in Atlanta with the purpose of exploring the various positions in the organization on "independence." Brother Kwame Agyi Akoto and Mzee (Hannibal) Afrik presented compelling arguments which affirmed CIBI's traditional position on "independence." Mzee Imani Humphrey and I presented arguments on the possible advantages of expanding CIBI's membership requirements to include charter school membership.

2. At the January 1998 Ndundu retreat in Pasadena it was brought to the attention of Ndundu members that APAS was prepared to resign from the organization over the issue.

3. Debate continued at the April 1998 Ndundu meeting in Detroit, where in the spirit of Maat, I proposed a compromise position which would have allowed charter schools currently in the rganization to remain members but to be allowed to only hold associate member status. It was finally agreed that those charter schools in CIBI would be allowed to remain full institutional members for a limited period of time pending upcoming institutional evaluations.

4. At the January 1999 Ndundu retreat in Washington D.C. , the issue of charter school membership in CIBI continued to hold a prominent position in discussions. As institutional self-evaluations were reviewed, it became apparent that charter schools in CIBI will never be able to receive accreditation because of the inability to comply with criteria 5.06 which speaks to the institutions' source of funding. It had been previously decided that meeting 5.06 was mandatory of institutions to become accredited. [421]

Yakini's February 23, 1999 letter provides a chronology of the events regarding charter schools within CIBI. Heru Hotep's 2001 dissertation *Dedicated to Excellence: An Afrocentric*

---

[420] Letter from The Afrikan People's Action School Board addressed the Council of Independent Black Institutions Ndundu and Executive Committee dated November 18, 1996

[421] Malik Yakini to Dr. Mwalimu Shujaa (executive officer of CIBI during the time) dated February 23,1999

Oral History of The CIBI, 1970-2000, also addresses this period within CIBI. Hotep's work is a qualitative study with extensive interviews of the CIBI's four former executive officers. In Hotep's interview with Mwalimu Shujaa, the former executive officer said that "the charter school debate really ended up redirecting our energy into an area that was distracting." Shujaa said that it has been a "real divisive issue" and that "there are CIBI members who feel betrayed. They believe that people they have struggled with for decades have betrayed the organization and betrayed the values of the organization. They don't want to hear , 'Well it's our tax money, or it's a form of reparations to be a charter school.' They don't believe that and they can't believe the people who have opted to turn their institutions into charter schools would have said that because they also helped to design the policies that they now are interpreting in ways that are different than intended."[422] Along with expressing betrayal, Shujaa discussed the main objective of African-centered education and a key tenant of public education. He explains: African-centered education has but one goal--nation building. Education has to address the fulfillment of that goal. Our objective is to regain national sovereignty, what else can we do? What else is there? Can our aim be to learn how to live as servants in someone else's house? Or do we find ways to be self-determining and sovereign people? Now what other people call education settles for less than this. They teach only how to get along in somebody else's global system. If I ask you what's the aim of the U.S. public school system, it might be hidden, but the aim is really to contribute to the maintenance and perpetuation of the existing order.[423]

---

[422] Mwalimu Shujaa in "Heru Hotep "Dedicated to Excellence: An Afrocentric oral history of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1970—2000" (doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa),

[423] Mwalimu Shujaa in Hotep's " Dedicated to Excelllence"

"Baba" Hannibal Afrik (community activist, elder, and founding CIBI member and CIBI Ndundu member) shares a similar public education perspective with Shujaa. In his March 29, 1997 position paper responding to the discourse on charter schools, he says, "It is my contention that public schools never have, are not now and conceivably never will educate Afrikan children to their maximum educational and cultural potential."[424]

I presently know of no public school that is controlled by nationalist in this country. Furthermore, I don't even know of any mass movement in any city that has implemented a nationalist agenda in public schools." Clarifying disparities regarding the term "African-centered" Afrik says explains, "beware of the term 'Afrikan-centered' because it does not necessarily denote a clear political or ideological paradigm but instead is an alternative curriculum approach to teaching and learning. Much of what is labeled as Afrikan-centered has nothing to do with nation building." He concludes "Charter schools exist primarily as a legislative appeasement to 'white flight' from inner city schools and those parents' demand for either tuition-tax credit or freedom of 'choice'." Yakini's letter to Dr. Mwalimu Shujaa dated February 23, 1999, retrieved from Nsoroma Institute archives.[425] Afrik and Shujaa's comments are indicative of the sentiments of the opponents of African-centered charter schools within CIBI. The decision of the schools to become charter and the ensuing discourse would culminate in the departure of both Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute from CIBI. Yakini's February 23, 1999 letter explains: "The issue has been discussed and debated endlessly. We have reached an impasse. Therefore, in the interest of bringing closure to this issue, it was tentatively decided at

---

[424] Hanibal Afrik, "Towards National Liberation: On possibility and Desirability of Education for Self-Reliance: To Charter or Not to Charter" Clarity or Confusion?" n.d. Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

[425] Hanibal Afrik, "Towards National Liberation: On possibility and Desirability of Education for Self-Reliance: To Charter or Not to Charter" Clarity or Confusion?" n.d. Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

the February 20, 1999 meeting of the Midwest Regional meeting that Nsoroma Institute, Aisha Shule/Dubois Academy and Timbuktu Academy will resign from CIBI at the end of the current school year. During the next month we will present this tentative decision to our parents and staff for their feedback. Based on this feedback, a final decision will be made at our March 20th meeting."[426]

Members of the Ndundu and the CIBI viewed the Detroit schools resignation as an act of betrayal of the agreement (illustrated in excerpt No. 3 from Yakini's letter) which had been reached by both sides of this philosophical debate. By the end of the 1998-99 academic year, the Midwest Region schools (Aisha Shule, Nsoroma Institute, and Timbuktu) resigned from the CIBI. Their departure and decision to become chartered, consummated the era of public African-centered education in Detroit.

Internal Challenges

Along with the challenges faced by the Detroit schools within the Council of Independent Black Institutions, they faced challenges within their perspective institutions. The following section of this chapter will extrapolate the perspective of the administrators, and various teachers, students, and parents regarding their perceptions of the new challenges that accompanied the school's new status. Interviews with both Humphrey and Yakini were indicative of a rational for this decision. Humphrey explained that the administration and the school staff thought it was advantageous to become a charter school because it offered an

[426] Yakini to Dr. Mwalimu Shujaa date February 23, 1999, retrieved from Nsoroma Institute archives.

opportunity to open enrollment to more students than they were able to accommodate at the time.[427] Yakini also said:

> Given my own analysis of the dynamics in the City of Detroit, which I mentioned in terms of the 16 Detroit Public Schools being started that called themselves African-centered. Given that Aisha Shule had gotten a charter and we immediately lost a third of our students. Given all these dynamics it was my analysis that if we didn't become charter we would wither on the vine and die, or we just would become and after-school program or Saturday program like that… we couldn't sustain . . . to use the correct lingo to operate in that mode was not sustainable given the dynamics that we were faced with, you know I pushed within our own institution . . . and we decided to pursue the charter.[428]

Although the preceding factors were instrumental to the schools' transition there were problems which came with the transition. The framing domains of African-centered education--Ideology and Philosophy, Black curriculum development and Implementation, Parental Involvement, along with student behaviors were areas that indicated significant challenges for the newly chartered African-centered schools. The following renderings were generated in response to informants being asked how they would compare the school's operation before and after the charter.

Ideology/Philosophy

The issues of ideological and philosophical integrity were raised by the debates that occurred within the CIBI from 1994 through 1999 and the inability of either of the Detroit schools to meet criteria 5.05 and 5.06 of the organization's membership and accreditation criteria. Moreover, those participants interviewed reported there were significant changes made regarding the ideology and philosophy of the Detroit schools. The first line of the CIBI pledge:

---

[427] Imani Humphrey, interview by author, Detroit, MI. April 2,2010

[428] Malik Yakini, interview by author, Detroit, MI. September 2003

"We are an Afrikan people struggling for national liberation . . ." [429]--affirms the Black Nationalist mission of its member schools. Shortly after the Detroit schools resigned from CIBI, the pledge was dropped from both of the school's daily assemblies. The new status also led Aisha Shule to revise its mission statement. Mission statements "embody the philosophies, goals, ambitions and mores"[430] of an organization. Boniswa Brock, a former parent and teacher administrator of Aisha Shule explained:

> We had to rewrite our mission for the charter. So there was a conversation about what our mission was. We have to redo our mission [statement] every so many years based on the expectations of the state. If I remember there was a huge discussion with the staff at the time. Even discussing the mission of the school after the charter with the staff there were polar ideas about what the mission of the school should be and some compromise… the compromise is what we have now. The giftedness of all children, their becoming change agents, but the terms of nation building and nation maintenance those are part of the curriculum, not that they are not part of the mission…it's kind of there and not there.[431]

Boniswa's words indicate that after Aisha Shule had become chartered, there was a lack of clarity and cohesiveness regarding its original mission. That this may have inhibited the institution's ability to meet that mission is also reflected in her assertion that, "We understood in turn that the goal was . . . sovereignty and nation building for our people's liberation . . . but it hadn't matched up."[432] Boniswa explained that there was an expectation of the newer staff members to embrace the curriculum, ideas, training and related materials that reflected the intended mission. However this proved not to be the case, she explained they were

---

[429] Council of Independent Black institutions Pledge which express the Black Nationalist philosophy. Mission of the origination. The pledge was found through numerous CIBI, Nsoroma Institute and Aisha Shule document.

[430] Excerpt from more extensive definition of the contents of the mission statement. Retrieved from www.missionstatements.com

[431] Boniswa Brock, interview by author, Detroit, MI. June, 2010

[432] Boniswa Brock, interview by author, June 2010

not thinking about these things nor did they embrace or believe them. Therefore, they could not teach them.[433]

Malika Pryor former student of Aisha Shule, who reflected on the teachers who came to the Shule after the school was chartered, said that "not only were these teachers who were inexperienced in the classroom in general, they were teachers who were less experienced in terms from an African-centered perspective."[434] Former parent/teacher Boniswa Brock and former parent/board-member Beverly Greenwood reflected on two CIBI institutions that were instrumental in staff development regarding the ideology and philosophy associated with African-centered education. Greenwood said that the CIBI Science Fair and Teacher Training Institute (TTI),[435] "afforded an opportunity for everybody-the administrators, the instructors, the students and parents-to network with people from like institutions" Boniswa made similar comments:

> The Teacher Training Institutes we had every year for two weeks or a week. I mean we would stay up all hours of the night sitting and talking, philosophying and discussing. I mean the level of intellectualism was stimulating… even with new staff, they were excited, it helped them to . . . I think they were more comfortable and embraced and understood more of what we were doing and why we had institutions like these, or why we were choosing the path we were for our children. I also think it kept in the forefront on their minds what it is that we want for our people, and our children in reference to things called independence and freedom. That has been lost somewhere in the dialogue about how we are going

---

[433] Boniswa Brock, interview by author, June 2010

[434] Malika Pryor, interview by Dr. Joyce Piert, Detroit, MI. n d

[435] The Council of Independent Black Institutions Science Fair and Teacher Training Institute. An undated document entitled The Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) retrieved from Nsoroma Institute Archives, which read as a narrative/overview of the organization described the CIBI Science Fair was the organization's annual Science Exposition held in April. During the National Science Fair students from member schools throughout the nation come together to present science projects in "a uniquely non-competitive environment in which they are evaluated according to criteria based upon the Nguzo Saba."

> to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and how we are going to have good students get good grades.[436]

The preceding passages address the issue of the school's mission being compromised under the charter.

Black Curriculum Development and Implementation

The staff member's willingness to revise the mission statement and compromise the mission was also indicative of the newfound challenges related to the school's ability to retain the integrity of the original mission of African-centered curriculum. Boniswa's comments suggested an inability of the newer teachers to implement the African-centered curriculum. Although similar issues occurred at Nsoroma Institute, there was more balance present among their teachers regarding the ability to implement the philosophical and ideological aspects of the original African-centered curriculum, according to Yakini. "We always maintained a balance, and so we continued to basically have two strains within our professional development, one that deals with African-centered values and an African-centered interpretation. The other strain usually is more focused on a specific discipline "how do you teach writing? how do you teach math? how do you teach English."[437] Yakini's comments suggest a greater degree of retention regarding the African-centered philosophy and ideology among Nsoroma's staff; however, acceptance of the charter presented curriculum challenges for both institutions. The stakes

---

[436] Mama Boniswa Brock, interview by author, June 2010 TTI or Teacher Training Institute was a bi-annual teacher training held by the Council of Independent Black Institutions to train its member teachers. The CIBI Member Handbook indicated that The Teacher Training Institute's name was changed 2-17-2001 and re-named the Walimu (Teachers) Development Instituted (WDI). The document explained that " the teacher development opportunities offered by CIBI have directed toward person who were actually teaching in an independent Afrikan centered institution or who planned on doing so. The focus of WDI was the same. WDI is held annually in conjunction with CIBI's conference and convention schedule."

[437] Malik Yakin, interview by author September 2003

related to becoming a charter school "were high," he said, referring to the state required MEAP test.[438] "If you don't achieve at a certain level on the MEAP test then your school will no longer exist. That's the ultimatum. You know sanctions, and with the various stakes, AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)[439] there's various levels of sanctions, if you don't demonstrate achievement via the MEAP test at a certain level of proficiency. It forced us and other schools to put more energy into teaching test taking skills, giving students practice taking tests and making sure teachers are teaching the materials that are going to be on the test. So you know . . . it caused us to shift and to make that more a priority."[440] Once again we see compromises made to accommodate aspects that could be deemed outside the scope of the African-centered curriculum. Furthermore, several instances occurred where the author observed lesson plans that were aligned with the state standards and benchmarks which were required by administrators, while there was no requirement for the alignment of curriculum materials with African-centered curriculum standards and benchmarks.

Parental Involvement, Development and Redefinition

---

[438] MEAP Michigan Educational Assessment Program, The MEAP test is a required assessment test given administered in public schools throughout the state of Michigan. Michigan MEAP test are based on content standards developed by Michigan State Educators and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education. The Office of Educational Assessment posits that "no other test measures what Michigan students should know and should be able to do against Michigan content standards and performance standards. The preceding information was retrieved from Michigan Department of Education website located at www.Michigan.gov.

[439] Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The Michigan Department of Education defines AYP as the "cornerstone of the *Federal No Child left Behind* of 2001 it measures year to year student achievement on the Michigan Educational Achievement Program for elementary and middle schools, or the Michigan Merit Examination (MME) for High schools. It is important to note that this test was required by the state of Michigan prior to the 2001 adoption of No Child Left Behind which exceeds the scope of this study.,

[440] Malik Yakini, interview by author, Detroit, MI. September 2003.

Parental Involvement and Development/redefinition addresses parental participation and involvement in the schools and its growth and development. This area includes the education, development and African-centered transformation of the parents as well. The adoption of the charter by both schools came with challenges in this area as well. It is noted in the preceding chapters that parental involvement and development were essential aspects of Uhuru Sasa and CIBI. Additionally, these aspects were present and essential among the founding parents of both Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute. Both schools however, experienced shifts in this area as well. The changes regarding parent involvement and development are indicated in a shift in the existing parents' attitudes and decreasing levels of parental participation. This work reveals that the quality and level of parental involvement and development declined during the charter period. Yakini however indicates that there was a shift among the parents that occurred prior to the transition to charter schools. He explained:

> The shift really began even prior to that [the charter). One of the things that drove the shift is that Black parents with the Afros and the beads around their neck and the locks and the African clothes would come in and within the first two or three minutes of the discussion, their question would be what are your students' standardize test scores like? So in order to even appeal to the community of people who we were trying to get to enroll their children, we had to put more emphasis on the academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores. So that began the shift. Because at one point in the African-centered school movement. I won't say within our school, but in the African-centered school movement, that was not the primary concern of parents enrolling their children. Because most of the parents initially were nationalist themselves or had nationalist leanings or Pan Africanist sympathies or something like that, and they weren't really very concerned about the systems measure of success. They were functioning from another paradigm themselves. So, it became a shift in the people who were supporting African-centered schools, which corresponded with the decline in consciousness of the organization and the community as a whole.[441]

[441] Malik Yakini, interview by author, Detroit, MI. September 2003

Although it was not clear what the cause of this shift was it did indicate the ability of the parents to impact the direction of the school.

The preceding was particularly interesting considering that at the inception of both schools the parents operated from a different perspective. Yakini explained that "at a tuition based school, most of the parents that make the financial sacrifice are also more committed and that although there was a shift after the charter they still had great parent involvement and some of the energy from the tuition-based school's body some of that zeal and enthusiasm.[442] Yakini explained that as the school moved forward with the charter, the "type of parent coming into the school shifted" and that "there came a point where the majority of the parents were no longer sending their children to the school because they believed in the values and the world view that was being taught at the school." The new parents were more attracted to the fact that the school had smaller class sizes, loving teachers and that the students were doing well academically.[443] Historically Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute were founded and operated by the parents of the children who attended the schools. The schools were founded as "community institutions, the peoples institutions and so the people within it had the responsibility for maintaining it and developing it." Yakini proclaimed this mindset was "outside the experiences of the new parents and that they came to the schools with a perspective that the operating and development of the school was the administrator's responsibility." Yakini's comments were echoed by Greenwood who explained after the charter there was less family involvement and less parental involvement.[444] "There was a sense of ownership, you know prior to the charter and things, you know, that

[442] Malik Yakini, interview by the author, Detroit, MI., September, 2003
[443] Malik Yakin conducted by the author, Detroit, MI., September, 2003
[444] Beverly Greenwood, interview by author, Detroit, MI., September, 2003

you are a part of that you were involved in the maintenance, and you tend to take better care of those things. I feel it's lacking to some degree since the charter."[445] Although some level of parental involvement was retained in both schools, it decreased significantly. There were also some indication of programs that were designed to contribute to the parental development, but this entity has decreased as well.

Student Behaviors

Just as the level and quality of parental involvement declined with the adoption of the charter, there were also shifts in the student body at both schools. Prior to their decision to become chartered, both schools had very small populations. There were generally less than 50 or 60 students. After adopting the charter, the population of both schools increased significantly. "Once it [Aisha Shule] transitioned from a private institution to essentially a public institution," Malika Pryor said, "their population ballooned and there was and still is. . . I believe that there is a tough transition for the institution."[446] Prior to the school's transition, the schools were able to control the admission of new students. The data also indicated that the student body was initially comprised of families who shared the Black Nationalist and Pan Africanist philosophy. Acceptance of the charter mandated the schools admit all applicants based on availability of space and facilitate a waiting list and lottery for perspective students. Taharqa Blue, a graduate and current president of Aisha Shule's Board of Directors, explained "with the whole charter school piece, just a lot more random folks were coming in . . . just a different clientele of people who didn't necessarily have the whole African-centered viewpoint, so things were a little

[445] Beverly Greenwood, interview by author, Detroit, MI., September , 2003

[446] Malika Pryor, interview by Dr. Joyce Piert, Detroit MI. date unknown.

harder."[447] The difficulty expressed in Taharqa's comments were echoed and made clear in Greenwoods assertion that " with the charter we got some discipline problems, how do I say this Some students that have other issues that prevent the focus on education things that interfered with the educational process like family problems, mental health issues, etc."[448] Former student Joy Greenwood explained that "a lot of students came in with a very what we thought was a thuggish mentality and a very different wild and boisterous posture, we had a calm environment."[449] The behaviors which accompanied the influx of new students included fighting, yelling and throwing food and fighting against the schools protocol.[450] "Having order and discipline just went over their heads."[451]

"The behavior of these students had a dual impact on the school culture the negative impact led the administration to create special programs because there was a percentage of students that did not excel, without you know focused attention on some issue or circumstance that really doesn't have anything to do with education but impacts education."[452] The positive impact these students had on the school culture was that their behavior prompted the existing students to take a leadership position in response to their behaviors. Taharqa described the deviant behaviors as a "free for all" and declared that neither he nor his peers were going to

---

[447] Taharqa Blue, interview by author, Detroit, MI. July 2008

[448] Beverly Greenwood, interview by author, Detroit, MI. September 2003

[449] Joy Greenwood, interview by Dr. Joyce Piert, Detroit, MI. date unknown.

[450] This footnote combines comments extrapolated from interviews with Mama Boniswa, Joy Greenwood, and Beverly Greenwood which are listed previously in this work.

[451] Joy Greenwood, interview by Dr. Joyce Piert, date unknown.

[452] Beverly Greenwood, interview by author, September 2003

allow the students to disrupt the school culture.[453] He saw the new students as a challenge, asserting "I think it too was good for us because it tested us. And it gave us an opportunity to really reach out and learn other people and to just really be a part of developing ourselves and people."[454] Joy Greenwood, who echoed Taharqa's sentiments, said "we felt it was our duty to form a leadership group of students to defend our school and to defend our school's purpose and not allow these students to come in and transform it into something that we didn't want it to be. It was very, it was very liberating for us, and it was very empowering for us. From that moment on we were in a position where we were the leadership of the school. People fought too hard for us to be in this position for the knuckleheads to come in and trash it. We were going to run the school, and it was going to be run in a way that honors the struggles of our ancestors.[455]

Joy, Tahraqa and Malika were members of the class of 1998 which was Aisha Shule's first graduating class. Their comments are reflective of issues among the students which occurred during the earlier phase of the charter. The student's behaviors discussed above represent a trend that got worse in the years since the schools adopted the charter.

Conclusion

During the public period of the CIACEM Detroit's formerly independent African-centered schools became public schools in an effort to expand their availability and to compete with existing local public African-centered schools. This period of the CIACEM is significant in that it delineates a new direction taken by Detroit's key participants in the CIACEM. The emergence of charter schools in Michigan and the transition of Aisha Shule and Nsoroma

[453] Taharqa Blue, interview by the author, Detroit, MI. July, 2008
[454] Taharqa Blue, interview by the author, Detroit, MI. July, 2008
[455] Joy Greenwood, interview by Dr. Joyce Piert, Transcript, n.d.

Institute from independent/private schools to charter schools not only implemented ideological and philosophical dissention within the CIBI at the national level, there were also resultant challenges at the local level in the areas of ideology/philosophy, Black curriculum development and implementation and student behaviors. This chapter has presented a brief examination of the emergence of charter schools in Michigan, Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute's transition from independent/private to public schools and the subsequent challenges that emerged at the national and local levels. I posit that the preceding occurrences not only constitute ideological and philosophical divergence within the movement these actions constitute the emergence of a distinct ideological and philosophical strand within the broader African-centered education movement.

Conclusion

The intent of this work is to contribute to the scholarly discourse on the evolution of the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement (CIACEM), with particular focus on its' emergence in Detroit, Michigan from 1974 until 2000. A historical account of key events, individuals and organizations instrumental in the development of African-centered education in Detroit is presented in this work.

The first phase of this work establishes the historical antecedents of the CIACEM. Their efforts persisted for more than 150 years and are evident as African-Americans in Detroit established the city's first African-American-controlled schools during the mid-19th century. This legacy continued with contributions made in the 1930s and 40s with the efforts of the Nation of Islam who established the University of Islam. Their school was not only controlled by African-Americans, but also established a curriculum that was relevant to African-Americans and addressed their needs. The Detroit branch of the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life, realizing a similar need, made formal and informal contributions in Detroit schools, churches and other community organizations. This historical legacy continued as the Group on Advance Leadership (GOAL) joined the struggle of the Sherrill School parents group to fight segregation within the Detroit schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their efforts were heightened as they engaged the leadership of the Detroit school system to implement textbooks and other curriculum materials that were culturally relevant to the African-American Detroit population. GOAL, along with Detroit students, teachers and community members, were essential entities of the Community Control of School Movement (CCSM) in Detroit. During this period they contributed to the ideological foundation for the Independent Black School

Movement (IBSM) and its advocacy for independence and control of those schools that served Detroit area children and their families. My assertion that the above entities serve as antecedents to the movement is important in that it is a departure from the commonly-held notion that the CCSM via the Oceanhill-Brownsville group were the sole impetus for the movement.

The second phase of this work documents the inception of the Independent Black School Movement (IBSM) which later came to be known as the CIACEM. During this phase, I assert that the birth of the Uhuru Sasa School and the formation of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI), not only constituted the formal inception of the Independent Black School Movement (IBSM) and the CIACEM; they also serve as ideological and philosophical models that directed the evolution of the CIACEM. It is also during this phase that I document the birth and evolution of Detroit's first independent African-centered schools and their ideological and philosophical connection to the national movement.

The third phase of the study documents the inception and evolution of the Detroit Public School Board's journey to become an African-centered school district. This phase of the study asserts that Detroit teachers, parents, administrators and community activists engaged in a series of activities that resulted in the Detroit Public School System designating itself as an African-centered school district. This is supported by a historical account of the course this process took and a review of several primary and secondary sources. This phase also discusses how the availability of African-centered educational philosophy within the public domain posed perceived threats for the existing independent and private African-centered schools in Detroit.

The fourth and final of phase of this work discusses the enactment of charter school legislation in Michigan. It discusses the processes employed by Aisha Shule and the Nsoroma Institute to become charter schools and the dissention that ensued within the CIBI as a result of

their decision to transition to charter schools. This phase also documents the ideological and philosophical challenges and key issues and themes that emerged as a result of an intense five-year discourse that occurred within the CIBI. The internal challenges that were presented within the formerly independent African-centered schools Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute that were manifest in the areas of parental involvement, curriculum implementation, and student behaviors, are documented in this phase.

The many important findings that emerge from this work include: the historical role that African-Americans played in acting to control their education from the middle 19th century well into the 20th century. They exercised self-determination regarding African-American education and advocated for an education for their children that they controlled, was relevant, and served their children's needs. This study also revealed that during the conferences held in 1970s by the organizations that gave birth to this movement there was dissention among the participants regarding the best approach to effectively educate African-American children.

The crux of this dissention was whether or not the education of African-American children should occur through reforming the existing public educational systems or by creating African-American educational systems that were independent of public education in the United States. Although the former gave birth to the Independent Black School Movement, CIACEM the later perspective, though less prevalent, persisted. From 1970 onward, the IBSM grew prolifically, and though it is most noted for its emergence in the private sector, the efforts of those within the public domain were equally prolific.

At its inception the architects of the IBSM/CIACEM set out to establish educational institutions that were independent of the public education system. These institutions were not only independent they were guided by the philosophy of Black Nationalism, with nation-building

as their major goal.[456] Independence and sovereignty are essential components of the nation-building process. In their quest to obtain their goal, the CIBI embraced a common ideology that was "based on an understanding of a commitment to practice Kawaida, Black Power, Black Nationalism and Pan Afrikanism" [457] The collective efforts of the Council of Independent Black Institutions and its member schools not only located themselves clearly outside of the realm of mainstream American education, they did so along clear ideological and philosophical lines. The IBSM/CIACEM at its inception and early evolution was not only antithetical to the status quo its mission was the establishment of a Black Nation.

In this work, I contend that the efforts of the proponents of African-centered education philosophy within the public domain were valiant, but limited in their ability to fulfill the nation-building objective of African-centered education as outlined by the Council of Independent Black Institutions. I base the preceding contention on their inability to fully implement Black Nationalist ideology as reflected in the principles of Kawaida, Black Power, Black Nationalism, and Pan Afrikanism, in public schools. Each of the preceding principles present challenges for the implementation of African-centered educational philosophy within the public domain (public or charter schools).

Kawaida which is the undergirding ideology of the African American holiday, Kwanza is expressed in the Nguzo Saba (seven principles of Kwanza). The Nguzo Saba at every level is a direct contrast to Euro-American culture it "attempts to teach the [Black] Nationalist how to

[456] Mwalimu Shujaa Interview in Heru Hotep's "Dedicated to Excellence," p.iii

[457] Doughty, Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education: Focusing on the Independent Black School Movement" p.52

control the politics of the Black community."[458] The curriculum materials in the public and charter "African-centered schools" examined in this work indicate that both schools included the Nguzo Saba in their curriculum materials and/or urged their teachers do so. However, both schools' public status, in essence, rendered them to be an apparatus of the state. As a mechanism of the state, implies a conflict of interest with the state's objectives and inhibits these schools' ability to promote self-determination (Kujichagulia, the second principle of the Nguzo Saba). The inherent conflict is resonate in Black Nationalist/writer Imamu Baraka's definition of self-determination. He explains "self-determination is to govern ourselves rather than being governed by others. To build and develop alternative institutions locally, nationally, and internationally because each of these levels of activity complement the other and are rightfully a part of the process of development for oppressed people"[459]

The second principle Black Power is an essential part of the ideology of the Independent Black School.[460] It also presents an inherent challenge for the public adoption of independent African-centered education philosophy. Black Power means that "one should not beg for that which one has the power to take." and is additionally defined by its "four ends self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-respect, and self-defense."[461] Public schools dependence upon federal and state funding contradicts two of the four ends of Black Power; self-

---

458 Imamu Amiri Baraka, ed., The New Nationalism-A documentary of the First Modern Pan-Africanism, William Morrow & Company New York 1972p, 274

459 Imamu Amiri Baraka, *African Congress- A Documentary of the First Modern Pan African Congress* p. 12

460 Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education: Focusing on the Independent Black School Movement" p. 101

461 Doughty, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education: Focusing on the Independent Black School Movement" 101

determination (defined above) and self-sufficiency-(to provide all the basic necessities for the sustenance, growth, and survival of our people).[462]

Black Nationalism, which is the advocacy for making one's own nation, race or people distinct and separate from others in social, cultural, and political matters is the third principle of Independent African-centered education and inherently contradicts the goal of public education.

Finally the fourth principle essential to independent African-centered education is "Pan Afrikanism, the highest political expression of Black Power. Pan Afrikanism asserts that Afrikan people must govern themselves in order to determine their destiny and that all black people are Afrikans and that as Afrikans they are bound together racially, historically, culturally, politically, and emotionally.[463]

The public schools are clearly challenged to carry out the mandate of the IBSM/CIACEM as it was originally conceived. Doughty additionally provided six fundamental concepts of independent African centered education, the second of these decolonization - the acquisition of ownership and control by Afrikan people of the political, economic, social, and educational institutions which are rightfully their own, clearly demonstrates conflicts with the objectives of public schools. Shujaa's assertion that the United States public school's system's main objective is to contribute to the maintenance and perpetuation of the existing order, clearly juxtaposes public schools (African-centered or otherwise) in opposition to the nation-building goals of the IBSM/CIACEM.

The proponents for African centered education within the public domain were limited in their ability to fully implement African-centered education philosophy as it was originally

---

[462] Baraka, *African Congress- A Documentary of the First Modern Pan African Congress*, p.107

[463] Imamu Amiri Baraka, *African Congress- A Documentary of the First Modern Pan African Congress*, p.27

conceived. Challenged by the original principles of the independent African-centered education movement, the proponents of "African-centered" education within the DPS revised and co-opted the original philosophy of African-centered education to facilitate its' assimilation within mainstream education. The revision is evident in the omission of the Black nationalist/ nation-building focus of the pseudo "African-centered" approach implemented in Detroit's public "African-centered" schools. Moreover, the revision and assimilation of Independent African-centered education philosophy within the DPS undermined the agency of those pioneers and architects of the ISBM/CIACEM at its inception and early evolution. In chapter 3 of this work, I examined the process employed by the DPS to implement the African-centered educational philosophy. To aid the implementation of this curriculum, the proponents for the adoption of African-centered educational philosophy within DPS, consulted a plethora "African-centered" scholars from around the world. However, the pioneers, architects and practitioners of the IBSM\CIACEM were neither consulted nor were their contributions to the development of the movement recognized.

The revision, co-opting and assimilation of the African-centered educational philosophy by the proponents of "African-centered" philosophy within DPS not only undermined the agency of the pioneers and architects of the IBSM/CIACEM, their efforts also constitute an educational philosophy distinct from that which led to the founding of the IBSM/CIACEM. The IBSM/ CIACEM was conceived within the context of the Black Power movement and advocated for Nation-building, Independence and Sovereignty at its inception. The Detroit Public Schools existence as an apparatus of the state inhibits their ability to adopt African-centered educational philosophy as it was intended and could only be assimilated via the omission of the Black nationalist/nation-building focus of the original mission. It is on these grounds that I contend

that African centered educational philosophy as it was originally conceived cannot exist within the public domain, and therefore constitutes an approach to education ideologically and philosophically distinct from the IBSM and CIACEM as it was originally conceived.

Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy and Nsoroma Institute's transition from Independent to charter schools initiated the public phase of the Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement (CIACEM) in Detroit. It is during this phase that Detroit would be left with no independent African-centered schools. Detroit's first African-centered school, Aisha Shule, maintained its independence for twenty years (1974-1994). Nsoroma similarly maintained its independent status for 8 years (1989-1997). The directors, staff and families of both schools clearly aligned themselves with the ideology and philosophy of the Council of Independent Black Institutions until their resignation from the organization in 1999 (Aisha Shule 23 years 1976-1999 and Nsoroma Institute 10 years 1989-1999). Moreover, the directors of both schools assumed leadership positions within the CIBI. The decision of those who opted for transition from independent to charter is tantamount to the enslaved African who escapes enslavement and upon realizing the challenges that accompanying freedom opted to return to the plantation. Although funding with autonomy were the justification for this decision neither as dictated by the state could facilitate independence and sovereignty essential components of the nation-building mission of African-centered education. The leadership of both schools were clearly aware that their decision was inconsistent with key aspects of African-centered educational philosophy and would pose philosophical and ideological challenges within the CIBI. However, the emergence of charter schools in Detroit presented economic opportunities and challenges for the leadership of both schools. According to Mama Imani Humphrey, Aisha Shule parents welcomed the prospect of a tuition-free African-centered

education for their children confident it would enable them to prepare financially for their children's college education. The leadership of the tuition-based Nsoroma Institute perceived the tuition-free African-centered education available within Detroit's public "African-centered schools" and the newly chartered Aisha Shule as competitors, as well. The leadership of both schools also considered the prospect of charter school funding as an opportunity to enhance their ability to administer an African-centered education, however their colleagues within the CIBI interpreted their decision as an act of betrayal of the mission of the IBSM/CIACEM.

The prospect of charter schools within the Council of Independent Black Institutions presented challenges for the organization and the broader CIACEM. Furthermore the idea of public African-centered education challenged the ideological foundation of the movement which was based on nation-building, independence, and sovereignty. As the rupture emerged within the organization sides were taken and lines were drawn in the sand. Although there was a truce made within the organization the dissention persisted. Eventually Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute resigned from the CIBI. In the aftermath of this rupture the CIBI set about to re-organize itself and to produce a more clear definition of African-centered education as it pertained to independence.

Bound by the restrictions and constraints of the state (as discussed above) Aisha Shule and Nsoroma Institute's new public schools status renders them incapable of effectively implementing African centered educational philosophy as it was intended and inhibits their ability to effectively advocate for the one goal of African-centered education "nation-building." Furthermore, the revised interpretation of African-centered education philosophy that has been implemented within DPS is being challenged by current national educational reforms such as No

Child Left Behind, the dismantling of elected school boards, and the imposition of emergency financial mangers within the school system in Detroit, Michigan and throughout the nation.

APPENDICES

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Afrikan: The use of the letter K in place of the c in the word Africa was a common practice of cultural nationalist and Black power advocates during the Black power era. In this work the word Afrika (n) generally is used in the renderings and documents generated by the subjects of this study. The term may also be used interchangeably with the word Africa (n) and refers to all people or phenomena of African descent.

Afrocentricity: This termed was coined by African American Studies scholar Dr. Molefi Asante. Originally the term was used in two contexts; as a theory for social change as outlined in his 1980 work *Afrocentricity: a theory for social change*, the second context for the term is a theoretical perspective or approach to research and the generation of data. As an approach to conducting research Afrocentricity is guided by the assumptions that all research conducted on African people and phenomena must be examined from the perspective that Africa is central to the analysis.

Independent Black Institutions: These schools were the educational institutions established by the progenitors and sustainers of the Independent Black Education/Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement. These institutions were usually tuition based and independent of public or governmental funding. Their independent status was also characterized by an ideology and philosophy independent of mainstream educational agencies and institutions.

Maafa: Kiswahili word which means great disaster. This term is generally used to reference the historical experiences of people of African descent beginning with the period of African enslavement and oppression. The word also references the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and ensuing system of white oppression that persist.

Independent Black Education Movement: Collective organized movement of schools that were emerged out of the community control of schools movement. These schools were undergirded with a Black Nationalist philosophy and ideology.

Contemporary Independent African Centered Education Movement: This movement Emerged from the Independent Black Education Movement of the early seventies and is often called the African-centered education movement.

Independent: In reference to schools is typically K-12. The term generally applies to the source of funding. Independent schools are typically tuition-based or funded independent of public funds. The term also implies that the given institution is independent of the government and the White power structure.

Public: In reference to schools the term generally speaks to K-12 schools that are part of local and or national schools systems and fully governed by such.

Private: In reference to schools K-12. This term generally refers to the source of funding of schools which are typically funded independent of public funds. These schools unlike those schools designated as independent in this work are often part of the white power structure i.e. Catholic schools or other privately operated schools that operate within the context of the White power structure.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alkalimat, Abdul, *Introduction to Afro-American Studies: A People's College Primer* Chicago Twenty First Century Books, 1986

Baraka, Imamu A, *Pan African Congress- A Documentary of the First Modern African Congress*, William Morrow, 1972

Berkowitz, Sidney, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Detroit Community Control Schools Movement and the Decentralization of Detroit Public Schools" PhD Diss. Wayne State University, 1972

Boggs, Grace *Living for Change* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998

Bush, Lawson, "Independent Black Institutions In America: A Rejection of Schooling, and Opportunity for Education," *The Journal of Urban Education* March 1997

Doughty, James "A Historical Analysis of Black Education-Focusing on the Contemporary Independent Black Education Movement." PhD diss., Ohio State University 1973

Essien-Udom, E.U. *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America*, Chicago, University of Press of Chicago, 1971

Fine, Sidney *Violence in the Model City* East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 2007

Hotep, Heru, "Dedicated to Excellence: An Afrocentric Oral History of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1970-2000". PhD diss. Duquesne University, Pittsburgh.

Jackson, Harvey C. "Summary History of the Detroit Branch of the Association from the Study of Negro History and Life" *Negro History Bulletin* October 1962, back cover page un-numbered

Karenga, Maulana, *Introduction to Black Studies*, Los Angeles: University Sankore Press 1993

Katzman, David, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago: University Illinois Press, 1975

Kershaw, Terry "Toward an Afrocentric Paradigm: An Assessment and Some directions," *Journal of Black Studies* Vol.22 No.4 (1992):479

Kifano, Subira "Afrocentric Education in Supplementary Schools: Paradigm and Practice at Mary Bethune Institute" *Journal of Negro Education* Vol. 65, No. 2 (1996) p. 209

Konadu, Kwesi *Truth Crushed to the Earth Shall Rise Again,* New Jersey, African World Press, 2005

Lee, Carol "Profile of an Independent Black Institution: African Centered Education" Vol. 22 No.4 (June 1992) p. 165

Lomotey, Kofi "Independent Black Institutions: African-Centered Education Models" *Journal of Negro Education* Vol. 61, No.4 (1992)

Miral, Jefferey *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System,* Ann Arbor University of Michigan Press 1999,

Murrell, Peter, "Chartering the Village: The Making of an African-centered Charter School" Urban Education 1999 Vol. 33, (5) p. 565-583

Peirt, Joyce "SBA An Exploration of the Experiences of African American Young People Who Attended an African Centered School" PhD Diss. East Lansing, Michigan State University 2006

Rashid, *Hakim* and Zakiyah Muhammad, "The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools: Pioneers in the Development of Islamic Education in America", The Journal of Negro Education, 1992 p. 179

Roberts, Ebony, "A Journey of Transformation," PhD. Michigan State University, East Lansing, 2002

Satterwhite, Frank *Planning an Independent Black Educational Institutional,* New York, Moja House Publishing 1971

Shujaa, Mwalimu, *Beyond Segregation: The Politics of Quality in African American Education,* Thousand Hills CA. Corwin Press, 1996

Smitherman, Geneva and Clifford Watson, Educating African American Males, Chicago, Il: Third World Press, 1996, p. 24

Walker, Ina, "African-Centered Education: An Afrocentric Analysis of its Purpose, Principles, and Practices in an Independent Institution" PhD. Diss., Temple University 2001

Williams, Lorenzo J. An Africalogical Examination of the Contemporary Charter School Movement" Ph. D diss. Philadelphia, Temple University, 2001 p.104

Wright, Nathan *What Black Educators are Saying,* New York Hawthorn Books unknown date, p.9

Other Sources

Assumed name papers for Nsoroma Institute, Nsoroma Institute Archives, document dated 2/16/90

Detroit Board of Education (internal document) Title P.D.Q. Elements for School Success in

Detroit dated 11/2/88 received from Lawrence Patrick.

Unreleased Detroit Public School Documentary (DVD) titled African Centered Education, Date unknown received from documentary narrator Jeffery Miller.

Detroit Public School's Black Child Symposium Booklet, 1997

Detroit Public Schools Male Academy Proposal, By Task Force Dec. 1990, Retrieve from Dr. Jeffery Robinson's personal papers.

Black News "CIBI Perfects Technique for Teacher Training Institute" 1975. 3 (3):6, Nsoroma Institute's un-catalogued papers.

Report entitled *What Do We Owe Our Children* Presented to the Detroit Board of Education June 13, 1967 by Reverend Albert B. Cleage on behave of the Inner City Parents Council. Published in the *Illustrated News*.

Minutes from the Detroit Board of Education meeting 3/25/69 p.546, 547 Walter Reuther Library

Leaflet by Black Student United Front of Northern, "We Demand" dated 1971 Detroit Public School papers box 8 folder 14, Walter Reuther Library.

Detroit Public Schools Social Studies Core Curriculum Outcomes and Objectives, p.5-6 unpublished document. Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

The Framework and Definitions for African-Centered Education, *"Implementing Afrikan Centered Education"*Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

Afrikan-Centered Resolution: Detroit Public Schools. In *"Implementing Afrikan Centered Education"* Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

The Idaba, produced by Detroit Public School consultants, *"Implementing Afrikan Centered Education"* 1994

Inter-office memo from Eugene L. Cain Superintendent of Highland Park School district addressed to the Highland Park School Board 9/23/94.Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

Highland Park School Board special meeting of the Board of Education Trustee agenda 10/3/94 Nsoroma Institute archives.

National Center for the Study of Privatization of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, "Charter Schools in California, Michigan, and Arizona: An Alternative Framework for Policy Analysis" p.2 April 2002

Scott, Janell and Margaret B. Barber, Ocassional Paper Series, paper no. 40 *Charter Schools in California, Michigan, and Arizona: An Alternative Framework For Policy Analysis,* Published for the National Center for Study of Privatization of Education. P.4

Council of Independent Black Institutions Pledge, Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

Position paper "Towards National Liberation: On the Possibilty and Desirablity of Education for Self-Reliance: To Charter or Not to Charter? Clarity or Confusion?" undated, Nsoroma Institute archives.

Websites

Baseline Essays Website http://www.pps.k12.or. Us/depts.-c/mc-me/essays.php

Nataki Talibah Schoolhouse website, www.ntsd.com/

The Council of Independent Black Institutions Website, www.cibi.org

Michigan Department of Education Website Titled Charter Schools p.1 www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334_40088---,00.html

Michigan Educational Assessment Program document (MEAP), www.Mich.gov.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of innovation and Improvement, *Innovations in Education: Successful Charter Schools Washington, D.C. June2004, p.3 www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/scs/full_print.ht*

Newspaper Articles

Debra Adams and Margaret Trimer-Harley, "First Day Delights Most," *Detroit Free Press,* September 19, 1992.

Brenda Gilchrist, "Exhibit to Show History of Africa," *Detroit Free Press,* October 24, 1990.

Brenda Gilchrist, "Academy to Stay Despite tension," *Detroit Free Press,* August 13, 1992.

Susan Holmes, "Concern is Voiced On Schools Protest," Detroit Free Press, April 9, 1966.

Brenda Gilchrist, "Neighbors wary about Malcolm X School Move," *Detroit Free Press,* July 30, 1992.

Joan Richardson, "School wants out of harm's way," *Detroit Free Press*, March 15, 1996.

Detroit Free Press, "A pupil Who Stands Out Manages to Fit Right In" July 19, 1993.

Detroit Free Press, "Directors named for Male Schools: 3 programs to start in Detroit this fall" July 2, 1991.

Detroit Free Press, "Islam Cult Faces Court" April 17, 1934.

Detroit Free Press, "Malcolm X prides itself on High Marks in an uneasy year" July 2, 1993

Eddie Allen Jr., "Changing Perceptions of Malcolm X," *Detroit News, n. d.*

Anuradha Smith, "Go Home Malcolm X Neighbors Tell McGriff," *Detroit News*, n. d.

*Ron Russell, "*Malcolm X Academy Draws White neighborhood support," *Detroit News,* November 14, 1992.

Ron Russell, "Parents to Discuss Moving Academy Site," *Detroit News,* August 11, 1992.

Ron Russell, "Board may move school out of harm's way." *Detroit News*, February 9, 1993.

Detroit News, "Malcolm X School to Stay-for Now," June 9, 1993.

Detroit News, "No one reported shooting of city school bus, parents say," October 19, 1995.

*Detroit News, "*Waiting list Grows for all-boys school," n.d.

*Detroit News, "*Detroit's Oldest African-centered School Celebrates 30 years and a broader Vision for the Future," June, 2005

Irma Clark, "There is Simply no one best way to educate our children," *Michigan Chronicle,* July 11, 2001.

Michigan Chronicle, "DPS set to name principle of male academy," May 21, 1991.

Michigan Chronicle "I'll Go To Jail Says Boys Father," December 1, 1962

Albert B. Cleage "What Do we Owe Our Children?" *Michigan Chronicle*, November 4, 1967.

Albert B. Cleage "Individuals Are Weak, The Nation is Strong," *Michigan Chronicle*, October 28, 1967.

Dan Aldridge, "Serious Business: Community Control of Schools," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 16, 1968.

Michigan Chronicle, "DPS Set to Name Principle of Male Academy", May 22, 1991.

Larry Owens, "Academy Seeks Applicant for Fall, " *Michigan Chronicle*, June19, 1991.

Stephen Briscoe, "Malcolm X Academy site Challenged," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 5, 1992.

Handbooks

Council of Independent Black Institutions Handbook 2003, p.1, Nsoroma Institute un-catalogued archives.

Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. DuBois Prepatory Academy Parent Handbook, 1994 p.2, Aisha Shule un-cataloged archives.

Aisha Shule/ W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy Parent Handbook, 1996 Aisha Shule un-cataloged archives

Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook, 1994 p.4, Nsoroma Institute Archives. Nsoroma Institute un-cataloged archives.

Nsoroma Institute Parent Handbook, 2005-6, p.21, Nsoroma Instituted un-catalogued archives.

Interviews

Akmed, Tahirah. 2009. Interview by author. Tape recording, November 23.

Aldridge, Rev. Dan. 2008. Interview by author. Tape recording. September 16.

Anderson, Motisala. 2009. Interview by author. Tape recording. December 12.

Brock, Boniswa 2009. Interview by author. Tape recording. October 9.

Blue, Taharaqa. 2008. Interview by author. Tape recording. July 15.

Carter, Dr. Arthur. 2009. Interview by author. Tape recording November 2.

Curtis, Razia. 2008. Interview by author. Tape recording. July 2.

Davis, Karamu 2008. Interview by author. Tape recording. November 10.

Greenwood, Beverly. 2003. Interview by author. Tape recording. October 10.

House, Gloria. 2008. Interview by author. Tape recording. October 10.

Humphrey, Imani. 2009. Interview by author. Tape recording. August 5.

Ifeoma, Aba. 2003. Interview by author. Tape recording. September 10.

Kofi Lomotey. 1998. Interview by Dr. Kwasi Konadu, Transcript. June 19

Montgomery, Bonatchi. 2009. Interview by author. Tape recording April 7.

Nabawi, Mzee. 2009. Interview by author. Tape recording September 1.

Patrick, Lawrence. 2010, Interview by author. Tape recording. June 12

Pryor, Malik n.d. Interview by Dr. Joyce Piert, Tape recording.

Robinson, Dr. Jeffery. 2010. Interview by author. Not recorded. October 20.

Shabaka, Dahia. 2008. Interview by author. Tape recording. July 18.

Weusi, Jitu. 1998. Interview by Dr. Kwasi Konadu Transcript. August 1.

Yakini, Malik. 2009. Interview by author, Tape recording. April 1.

Yakini, Malik. 2008. Interview by author. Tape recording. November 10.

Personal Letters

Richard Henry to Norman Drachler, Drachler Papers box 98, Hoover Institute, Stanford University. San Jose, Ca.

Charles Golding, Michael Batchlor, and Judy Walker, and others (Northern High School Student) to Detroit Public Schools Superintendent Samuel Brownell. Remus Robinson Papers box 12 folder 32 (entitled Northern High School Incident) Walter Reuther Library.

Lewis, White, Lee, Clay, & Graves to the founders of the Alexander Crummell Center. Alexander Crummell Center Folder box #37. Bentley Historical Library Collection, University of Michigan. Episcopal Church Diocese of Michigan Collection, box 37

Dr. John Porter to Detroit Public School board members and employees regarding the implementation of male academies. December 1990 Retrieved from Dr. Jeffery Robinson Personal papers.

Male Task Force brochure "The Detroit Public Schools introduces the Male Academy". Retrieved from Dr. Jeffery Robinson Personal papers.

Malik Yakini to the Ndundu (leadership body of the Council of Independent Black Institutions) 17 March 1997 Subject matter: Membership of Charter Schools in CIBI. retrieved from Nsoroma Institute archives.

Nsoroma Institute Planning Committee Meeting Minutes 5-15-15

Charter House Academies, inc. to Malik Yakini, 13 June 1997 Nsoroma Institute Archives.

Lawrence Patrick on behave of Jaffe, Raitt, Heur & Wiess to Nsoroma Institute Board of Directors 25 July 1995. Nsoroma Institute Archives.

Malik Yakini addressed to the Ndundu (leadership body of the Council of Independent Black Institutions) 14 March 1997. Nsoroma Institute archives.

Standards for Evaluating Afrikan Centered Educational Institutions. In Dr. Heru Hotep's Dissertation, p.216-222

Afrikan People's Action School Board Addressed to the Council of Independent Black Institutions Ndundu and Executive Committee 18 November 1996.11/18/96. The author's personal papers.

Malik Yakini to Dr. Mwalimu Shujaa (CIBI Executive Officer) 23 February 1999. Malik Yakini's personal papers.