

Black History Assembly

Sponsored by Project Haven House and **United People Of Color**



Michael Mungai Nyambura at Saint Joseph's University

Michael Mungai Nyambura's Early Life

As a young boy, Michael Mungai Nyambura was one of countless children living on the streets of Kenya's impoverished Dagoretti province. After his father left, Michael's mother struggled to feed her children on \$2 a day. Unable to pay for school, 14-year-old Michael willingly left his family to ease their burden and took to living on the streets. It was on the streets that Michael met Christof Putzel who was filming *Left Behind*, a documentary about Kenyan HIV orphans and the street children of Dagoretti. Before Christof left Kenya, he introduced Michael to Bonnie Graboski, a woman from Allentown, Pennsylvania working as a volunteer in a Kenyan orphanage. Impressed with Michael, she paid for his schooling and later helped him identify sponsors for Dagoretti for Kids—a much needed youth center.

Inspired by a Film

Inspired by the documentary *Left Behind*, Mark Orrs (a student at Saint Joseph's University) traveled to Kenya to seek Michael out. Mark was not disappointed and found an intelligent and insightful young man. He

encouraged Michael to apply for a scholarship to Saint Joseph's University. Michael will be graduating from Saint Joseph's University in the Spring of 2010 with a double major in Philosophy and Economics.

MICHAEL MUNGAI NYAMBURA AT SAINT JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY (SJU MAGAZINE)

As an additional result of the exposure he earned through the documentary, Michael established contacts with volunteers who aided him in establishing Dagoretti 4 Kids. Since the organization's inception in 2003, Dagoretti 4 Kids has provided housing and schooling to more than

70 street children, many of them former drug addicts.



Michael's story would have been impressive enough had it ended there. But mindful of his own upbringing and all too aware of the children who remain on Dagoretti's streets, he and Orrs returned

to Kenya in the summer of 2006 to [film] their own documentary. With funding from a number of Saint Joseph's departments, their project tells Mungai's story by focusing on a street kid named Kabro. Mungai and Orrs filmed Kabro's struggles as well as his success after being placed at Dagoretti 4 Kids, where, after a tough period of adjustment, the boy is now off drugs and attending school.

With no film background before beginning his project, Mungai took classes with Deron Albright, associate professor of fine and performing arts, in order to learn editing. He and Orrs, who worked the camera, returned to Kenya in the summer of 2007

to begin some new projects. "Michael is very careful about not getting too comfortable here," observes Orrs, an advisory board member for SJU's College of Arts and Sciences and a doctoral candidate in sustainable development at Columbia University. "He's always been very committed about going back to Kenya. He's entirely committed to these children." "I usually talk about the children and the plight of these boys," says Mungai. "I thought film would be the perfect medium to portray the problems, the heart of them, all the things we go through. I'm using film as a platform to represent the children and advocate for their rights" (1).

Mr. Mungai has recently been accepted and will likely continue graduate studies at the Haub School of Business. He is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of Dagoretti 4 Kids, film maker, researcher, and student. Some of Michael's recent activities include:

-  A 2008 research project that provided young girls with sanitary pads and then measured school attendance.
-  A research project that investigated protected and unprotected sex in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, a slum with over 1 million people, where 1 of 5 is HIV positive.

Michael Mungai is 26.

1. Durso, Tom. "Left Behind No More." *SJU Maganize*. Summer 2007: 14-15.

SCHEDULE

Wednesday 17 February 2010


1st Block: All teachers of FRESHMEN will proceed to the auditorium at 7:35 and be seated by 7:40. The program starts promptly at 7:42 and will end at 8:55.

2nd Block: All teachers of SOPHOMORES will proceed to the auditorium at 9:05 and be seated by 9:10. The program starts promptly at 9:12 and will end at 10:22.

Thursday 18 February 2010

1st Block: All teachers of JUNIORS will proceed to the auditorium at 7:35 and be seated by 7:40. The program starts promptly at 7:42 and ends at 8:55.

2nd Block: All teachers of SENIORS will proceed to the auditorium at 9:05 and be seated by 9:10. The program starts promptly at 9:12 and will end at 10:22.

 Teachers with mixed classes must decide to take an entire class or merely send a portion of the students to the auditorium. For teachers who decide to take an entire class, this may result in handful of students seeing the program twice. This program is wonderful and twice is not a penalty.