



MOJA
LOGO

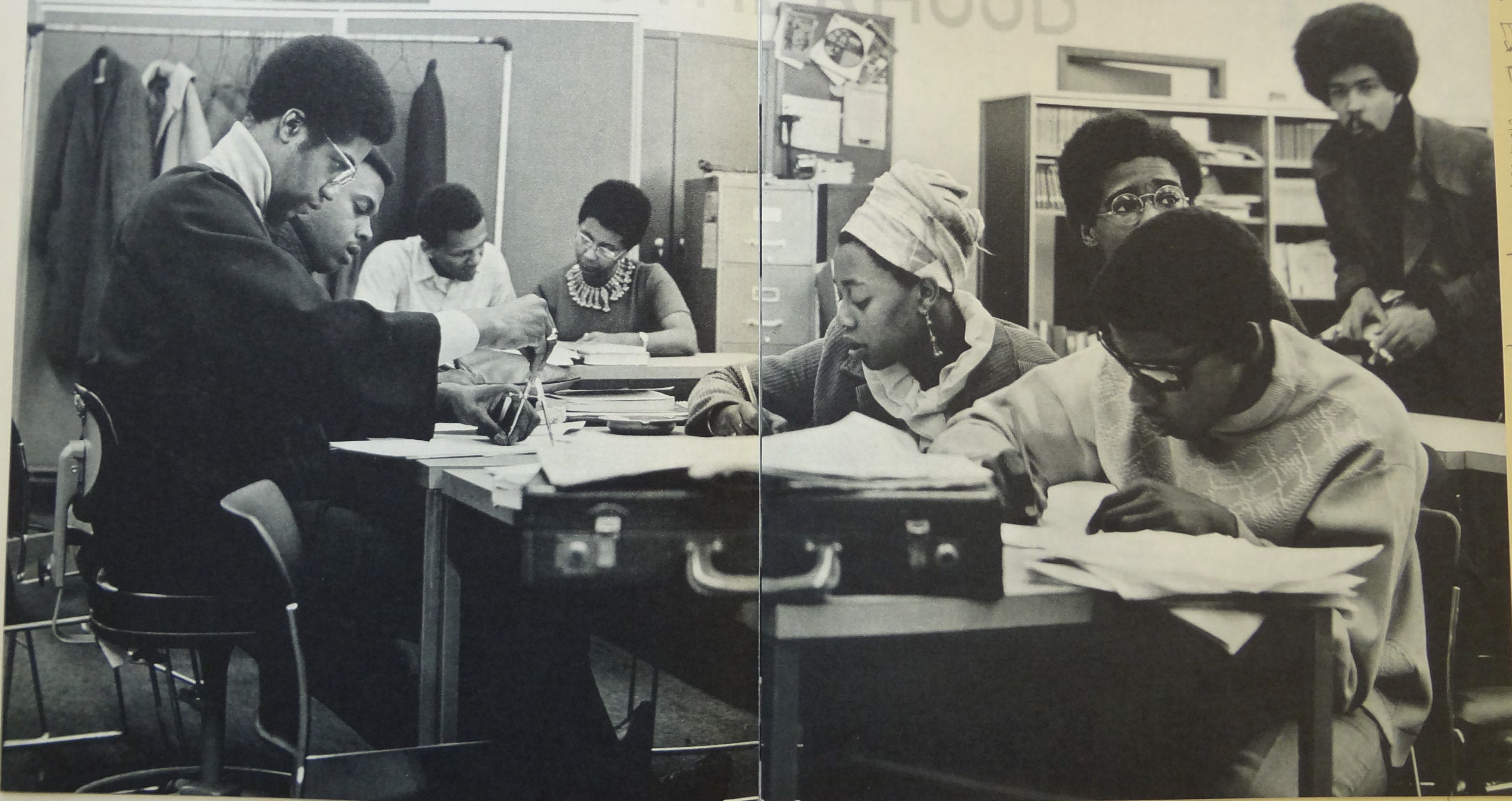
UNITY
BROTHERHOOD

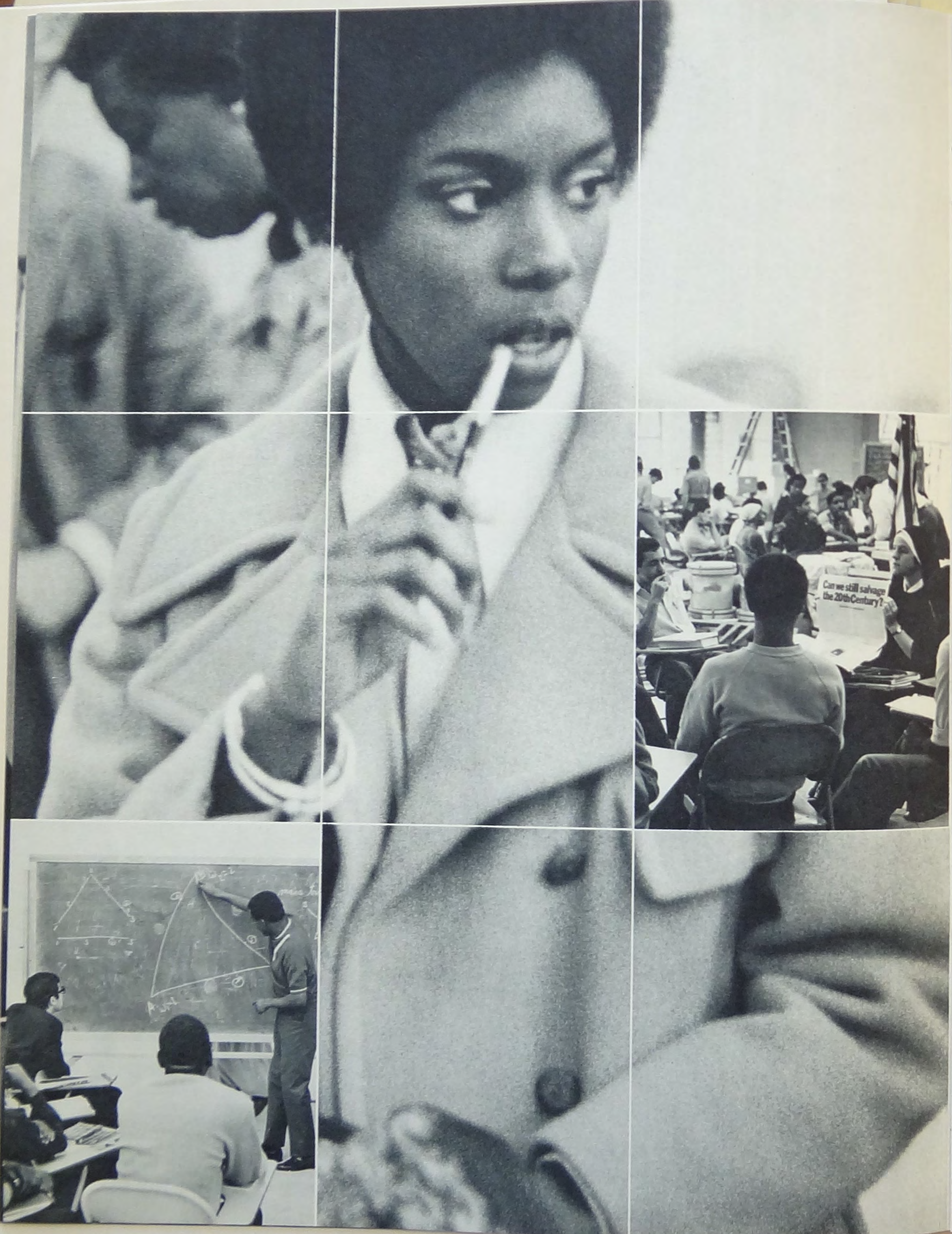
The Story of Harlem Preparatory School

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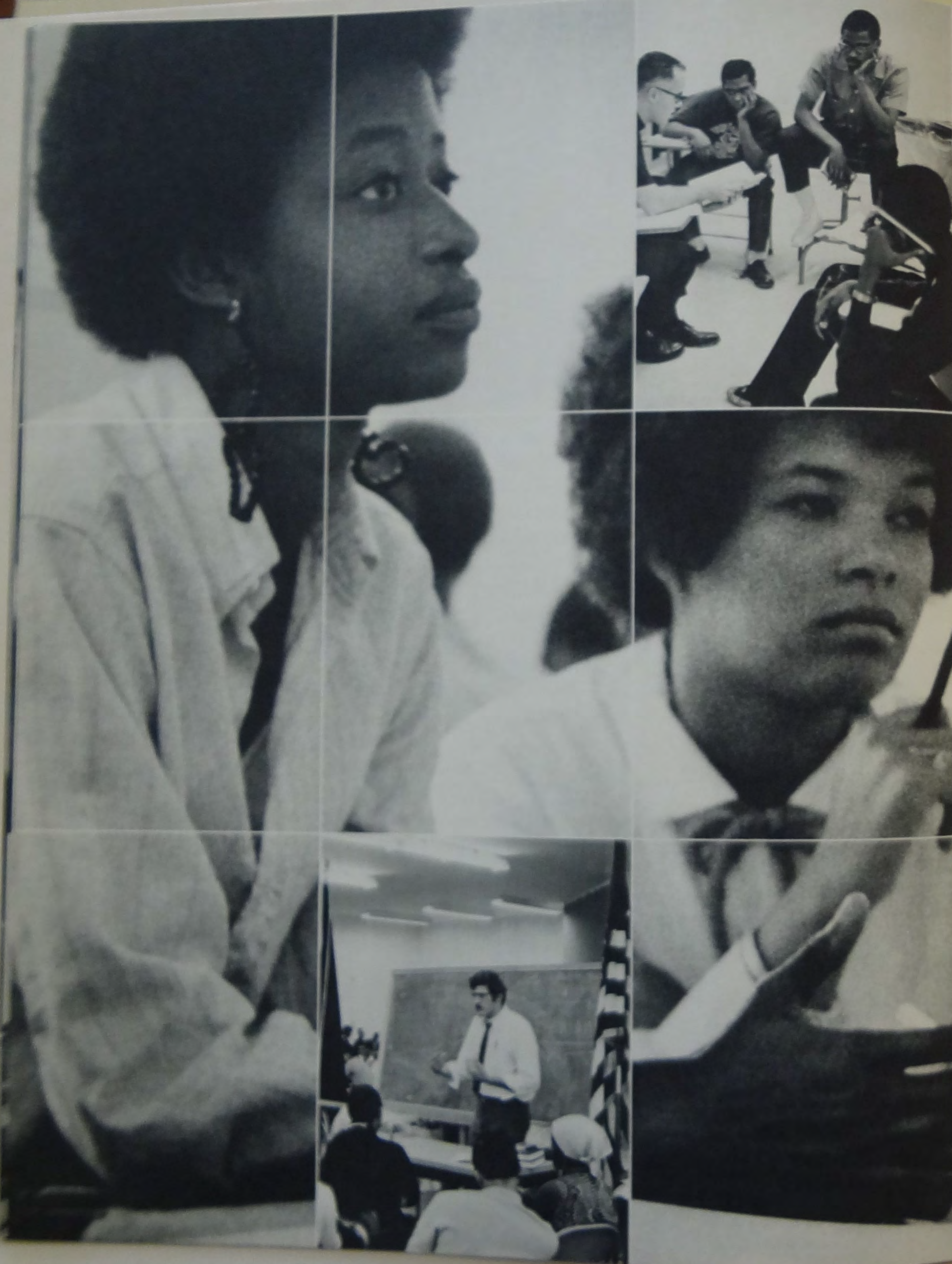
Ford Foundation records,
Photographs

E 3 2 - Harlem Preparatory School, 1960





Harlem Preparatory School is a unique pioneering venture in education. The school was founded in 1967 to fill a specific need—to provide a means for getting high school dropouts and other unqualified Harlem youths admitted to college. From an inauspicious beginning, the school has become a dynamic force in the life of the community. With sufficient support, Harlem Prep may well serve as a prototype for other communities to help solve one of their basic problems—lack of educational opportunity.



MOJA and LOGO are written on the wall at Harlem Prep. These two words of African origin for unity and brotherhood have as many meanings as our school's students have diverse experiences. But each of our lives is united for one immediate aim—to go on to college. As a family helps its members get a start in life, we students help each other toward our common goal.

Harlem Prep really is a family—and not one just in name. People at the school I formerly attended spoke of being a family, but what was projected was the coldness of an institution that paralyzed creative thinking. The difference between that school and Harlem Prep is the difference between my turning out to be a graduation statistic or a creative thinker in whatever field I might choose.

The fact that everyone knows everyone else adds to Harlem Prep's personal character. Even the person with the most contrasting point of view is my friend—better yet, my brother. Brotherhood—it's written on the wall, and it's practiced by students and teachers alike. And when you have a school where teachers and students work together, you have a family.

To all of us, Harlem Prep is a second chance, whether we dropped out of school or just managed to graduate. We know we are the lucky few who have this precious second chance. In order to make it, we have to meet these standards: "For graduation, students must have demonstrated the power to do college work; they

must be proficient in verbal and writing skills, as well as in mathematical skills. They must have acquired a firm grounding in social studies....The aim of Harlem Prep is not only a diploma, but to place a student in college. He must have a record for consistent attendance and punctuality and show his ability to live up to the spirit of the school, which presupposes self-development and service to the community."

Located in a dreary armory near the Harlem River for its first year, Harlem Prep ushered thirty-five students into U.S. colleges and universities. The spirit of Harlem Prep was born in that armory. Now located in a remodeled supermarket that is undergoing metamorphosis into a school building, the spirit of Harlem Prep is carried on by us.

It's not the same place for more than a week. When we first came to the building, there were no blackboards, or study tables, or even, to some extent, books. The school was one spacious room, contrasting drastically to the large, many-cubicle standard secondary school buildings. You can imagine it: a supermarket, minus the shelves and counters. But that was the first week. For a while, book-shelf partitions were erected between classroom areas, where once, only space made one class distinct from another. Now the library is shelved on lower book cases, and once again, there are no physical dividers between classes. The atmosphere of the building has been softened by a new acoustical

ceiling and a black-flecked green carpet covering the entire school floor.

Many people believe that classrooms and textbooks are necessary to education, but Harlem Prep can testify that they are not. What makes a school is what goes on in the classes—and in each individual student. Our interests are so deep that outright questioning, even with anger, is common. Anger in my old school, even when it was directed at the lesson, was attacked as a lack of discipline. This made many students apathetic and kept them from taking part.

Harlem Prep, on the other hand, does not suppress response, no matter how strongly it is presented. Because we show our interest this intensely, it suggests that we are academically inclined. The teachers understand this. They react in such a way as to keep the lesson on topic, as well as to let us speak our minds. Moreover, the faculty is not just a body of teachers but a group of human beings who look at students as other human beings. This is what I think differentiates a Harlem Prep teacher—he accepts a student who questions as being involved rather than being a "disrupter of the class."

Smoking was a major reason for being expelled at my old school. At Harlem Prep, this rule, along with a few others, has been left out of the book. Eating in class was allowed—until the students themselves voted to dispense with it because it interfered with the educational process.

We can also attend the classes we choose. If, for some reason, the

teacher fails to show up, we can sit in on any other class—or sit alone and study. By not having a substitute teacher in front of the class, we are assured that Harlem Prep feels we are old enough and responsible enough to make independent decisions and judgments.

A project the faculty members want to undertake is to put their work into textbook form. Since our curriculum is so diverse, there are no textbooks that fulfill our requirements. For example, one instructor handles algebra, trigonometry, geometry, and computer math in the same course. To do this, he has to hand out worksheets nearly every day. All science classes include two or more sciences, such as chemistry and physics, or chemistry and biology. Clearly, the faculty members are developing new approaches.

When I said that textbooks are not necessary for classwork, I meant it. Textbooks are nothing compared to a faculty with interesting ideas. But this isn't all. At Harlem Prep, students themselves are encouraged to contribute ideas for improvement. It's a good feeling to have a teacher ask, "What do you think we should do?" And this has happened to me. Unlike ordinary schools, we don't have something pushed on us or have to fight for a say. We keep close touch with the administration.

The three administrators, including Mr. Carpenter, the Headmaster, teach and extend themselves as people. They are looked on by everyone as individuals.

There is a tree planted in front of Harlem Prep which, in a way, symbolizes our individualism. It is dedicated to Vic Gomez, a student who died striving to fulfill his goal. Many of us did not know him, but Mr. Carpenter did. He says: "Brother Vic was slight, intense, driven. He had three wishes: to attend Harlem Prep, to visit Africa, and to enter college. He died fulfilling his second wish; he was drowned while on safari in Africa. But the honor, dignity, and pride that he possessed are carried on."

The administration does not work alone. Along with the Board of Trustees, it works very closely with the Parents' Committee. In fact, five parents and the President of the Student Body serve on the Board. But this is not all the parents do. Since many potential college students work during the day, the Parents' Committee of Harlem Prep decided to open a night school. They engaged the faculty and manned the registration for subjects such as Psychology, Logic, English, Math, Swahili, Typing, and Investment Banking. Classes meet from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Here are some reactions of the school's night family: "Harlem Prep is a challenge, a pioneer, and a godsend. A challenge to the establishment which has discarded those who wish to be educated and economically better off. A pioneer in rendering educational assistance to these people. A godsend because we all ask where would we be without Harlem Prep?"

"If Harlem Prep doesn't do any-

thing else for me, or even if I don't make it to college, Harlem Prep has given me self-confidence. A man won't take the first step if he knows he is going to fall."

Not only the parents, but also the daytime students show concern for the community, and we try to demonstrate the feeling of unity inspired by Harlem Prep. In our free periods, many of us tutor children in the public schools in the neighborhood. During the teachers' strike, we helped out with elementary school pupils. We find that tutoring is richly rewarding for both tutor and pupil.

Though I think very highly of Harlem Prep, it has its weaknesses. Because our building is still being modified, we lack many things that established schools have. For example, laboratory and lunchroom facilities are still in the planning stages. Obviously these have priority over a student lounge and other luxuries, so they must be built first. But the amount of construction is relative to the amount of money the school has. Many good things will not be completed by the time I graduate. If more funds appear, more construction will be undertaken.

Enough about buildings! If the spirit of Harlem Prep could be introduced in large public schools, they would be making giant steps, not only in education, but giant steps toward real personal relationships. And that's what it's all about—unity and brotherhood. That's the writing on the wall!

James Rogers Class of '69

HARLEM PREPARATORY SCHOOL
2525 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10030

Edward F. Carpenter
Headmaster

Ruth Dowd, R.S.C.J.
Vice Principal

Harlem Prep is an independent, non-sectarian, private school.

It is the only college preparatory school in Central Harlem.

It was founded October 1967 in temporary quarters with 49 students.

By June 1968, enrollment reached 79, including 7 girls.

Harlem Prep graduated 27 students in June 1968 and 8 more during the summer of that year.

All 35 were accepted by accredited colleges and universities, tuition paid under federal NDEA loans to the students.

The school moved to permanent quarters in August 1968.

Enrollment for 1968-1969 started with 170; 35 of them were girls.

Second semester enrollment reached 132 boys and 49 girls.

Almost half of this group are expected to be graduated in June 1969 and accepted for higher education.

Night classes for adults and young working people began in January 1969.

No tuition is charged, and educational materials are free.

Harlem Prep is supported by private donations.

Photographs by Juan Mallea Jr., Class of '69

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Ford Foundation records, Photographs, EFR - Harlem Preparatory School, 1968

