

and enough position to be the foot on someone else's neck, or the parents who dare to declare by name that their child is "Unique" and above the multitude.

groups from the Evans neighborhood, and several have visited our flagship campus in the Shaw neighborhood, at the corner of 9th and 'I; NW.

PARTNERSHIP OF HOPE

A new approach to public education for the Evans Community

by JAMES FORMAN, JR.

In 1997, I helped found an innovative charter school for students who were not succeeding at the larger public high schools in the District. The Maya Angelou Public Charter School takes a comprehensive approach to serving teens who had stopped going to school or who were disengaged from the learning process. We offer small classes, paid work opportunities, on-site mental health services, and after-school programming that includes one hour of mandatory evening tutoring.



Over a year ago, we were approached by representatives of the DC Public Schools about opening a second campus. Working together, we developed the idea of a partnership that would bring the Maya Angelou level of programming to additional students in the eastern part of the city. One key element of the partnership is a unique collaboration with existing public high schools to identify students who would benefit from the Maya Angelou approach.

In meetings involving school board members as well as senior staff within DCPS, several possible locations for our second campus were identified. Through this process, Evans Middle School was identified as an ideal site. Under the plan, Maya Angelou would be housed on the top two floors of Evans, enabling the first two floors to be used as "swing space" for DCPS schools. (In fact, we understand, Luke C. Moore will be moving into the first two floors while its current campus is renovated.)

Early on, we expressed interest in talking with local residents and were told that DCPS and elected officials would help us engage the community at an appropriate time. We regret that community members were not engaged sooner. In recent weeks, however, we have initiated contacts with individuals and community

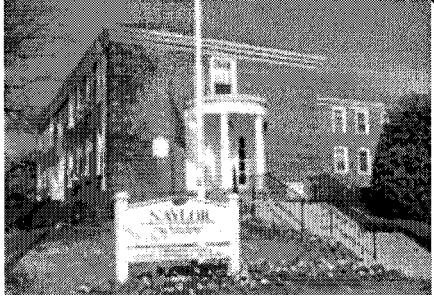
Some critics have expressed concern that the school board is simply "giving" a DCPS building to a public charter school. We disagree. Under our agreement, Maya Angelou is responsible for day-to-day maintenance of portions of the space, and we are making a contribution—based on a per-pupil amount—toward a fund to support maintenance and ongoing fix-up of the building. More important, as I noted above, our partnership with DCPS goes far beyond facilities. As a result of ongoing work between our staff and staff at Anacostia, H.D. Woodson, Ballou, and Eastern, we will be identifying those students in the eastern part of the city who are most in need of a comprehensive, full-day program like ours. We are also excited about developing partnerships with neighborhood groups to enhance our students' education and provide opportunities to the broader Evans community. At our current site, we operate a technology center where our students and alumni provide computer training to local residents. We look forward to working with community members to see what we can do together at Evans, in support of community needs.

Critics have also expressed concerns about our school's SAT-9 scores. We appreciate these concerns, and we have shared with the DC Public Charter School Board our strategies to enhance instruction and academic leadership at our present and future campuses. We also think, however, that community members should look at several measures—not only standardized test scores—in assessing our school's performance.

On average, Maya Angelou students move from attending school just under 50% of the time the year before enrolling with us to attending over 90% during their senior year. They improve their CPAs, on average, from a D prior to admission to a B upon graduation. And our seniors have historically improved their SAT scores by over 15%, compared with a national average increase of 5-6%. Further, over 90% of our parents say they would recommend the school to other families. A similarly high percentage of students say that they are learning more at Maya Angelou than at their prior school, that they have higher aspirations than before, and that they would recommend the school to friends. Finally,

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in spite of where many of our students are academically and socially when they start with us, over 70% of our graduates go on to 2- or 4-year colleges.

Other critics argue that the Evans community and its young people do not need a school like ours. Yet nearly 40% of our current students live in Wards 7 and 8, and commute across town to come to our school.

We are eager to have more Evans community members visit our current site and talk with our parents, students, alumni, and neighbors. In fact I want to invite individuals interested in visiting to call us at 202.797.8250 to arrange a time to come by. As residents become more familiar with what Maya Angelou has to offer teenagers and the community at large, we believe that they will welcome this partnership of hope for public education in the District.

James Forman is the Co-Founder of the Maya Angelou Public Charter School. jamesforman@seefarever.org

For too long the city has not taken its environment seriously. This neglect is hurting all of our quality of life and negatively impacting the health of our children. We have a morale obligation to provide our kids with clean water, clean air, and dean neighborhoods.

fy our outdoor air. Councilmember Fenty has introduced legislation to create 100% Smokefree Workplaces to purify our indoor air. Yet none of these proposals have gained traction.

Our city's neighborhoods are polluted with for sale signs on trees and poles, graffitti, garbage trucks, and abandoned vehides. These are issues that directly impact neighborhoods east of the River. We have too few police officers in the neighborhoods to crack down on for sale signs on trees and graffitti. We don't do enough to recycle or regulate the garbage industry to cut down on the number of trucks in our neighborhoods. We assign our tow trucks to tow cars parked in commuter thoroughfares during rush hours instead of the abandoned vehicles that pollute our neighborhoods.

How are we going to attract 100,000 new residents when they are afraid to drink our water, breathe our air, and look out upon polluted neighborhoods? The city must get its environmental house in order, both to increase the quality of life of our current residents and to attract tens of thousands of new ones.

We can do a better job recycling. I agree with Councilmember Fenty that we need a major overhaul of our city's recycling program. Only 6% of city agencies currently recycle. That's pathetic. Surely the District Government can do better. The District Government also needs to do a better job of communicating with the public about recycling. Fourteen percent of District households currently recycle while in neighboring jurisdictions 46% of households participate. Seventy-five percent of the city's garbage is hauled by private contractors out of apartment buildings, condos, offices, restaurants, and retail establishments. They are not currently required to perform even the most basic recycling.

For too long the city has not taken its environment seriously. This neglect is hurting all of our quality of life and negatively impacting the health of our children. We have a morale obligation to provide our kids with clean water, clean air, and dean neighborhoods. It's time the District Government took this obligation seriously.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN THE DISTRICT

by KWAME BROWN

Our city is in an environmental crises, directly affecting the quality of life of all District residents. Our water, our air, and our neighborhoods are polluted, yet only a few of our city's leaders are raising this issue.



Our city's water is unsafe for drinking unsafe for swimming, and unsafe for fishing. Last year 3.2 billion gallons of raw sewage were dumped into the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. For more than six months the city's residents were left in the dark by the DC Government about unsafe levels of lead in their drinking water. It is not safe for our children to swim in our rivers. It is not safe to eat fish caught in our waters.

Our city's air is unsafe to breathe. The EPA has ruled that our city is in violation of the Clean Air Act. This is not an academic issue. Our dirty air is directly linked to our city have the highest child African-American asthma rates in the country. Our city should require a greater reliance on alternate fuel sources and increases in auto emissions standards to puri