



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

CITATION ON

**DR. JULIUS GIKONYO KIANO**

ON HIS CONFERMENT OF

THE HONORARY DOCTOR OF LETTERS

**(D.LITT.)**

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

AT

**NAIROBI, KENYA**

ON

**1ST DECEMBER, 1997**

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### **DR. JULIUS GIKONYO KIANO**

**B.A. (Antioch), M.A. (Stanford) Ph.D. (California, Berkeley)**

Dr. Julius Gikonyo Kiano is a perfect blend of an intellectual and a professional politician. Julius Gikonyo Kiano was born in June, 1926 in Gathiga Village, Kanyenyaini Location, Murang'a District (then Fort Hall District) of Central Province. His parents Jonathan Kiano and Damaris Wanjiru Kiano, like many African rural families at the time were not rich. Jonathan was an informal trader having worked for missionaries in Nairobi and converting to Christianity. But he appreciated the value of education for his children. So Julius went to school at the early age of eight. He quickly distinguished himself as a brilliant student and it has been that intellectual brilliance that has carried him through.

Julius Gikonyo Kiano went to African Government School Kagumo in 1939. He was admitted to the prestigious Alliance High School in 1942. In Alliance he performed very well and passed. He was admitted to Makerere University College, though he was reluctant



as he had already made up his mind that he must study for a degree and not a diploma which was the highest qualification Makerere could offer. However, he eventually went to Makerere on the advice of Mr. Mbiyu Koinange and Mr. James Gichuru (former Cabinet Ministers) whom he met at Githunguri Teachers Training College where he taught for two months.

At Alliance he continued his scouting hobby which he had started at Kagumo and became secretary to the school troop. More pertinent he became the School Librarian in his final year, 1945 and editor of the Saturday evening paper which was a hand written weekly by the students. This role of editor opened up a new aspect in his life: political interest. It is at this time that Mr. Eliud Mathu, Dr. Kiano's teacher at Alliance was appointed to represent Africans at the Legislative Council (Legco) alongside Rev. Leonard Beecher. As the editor of the student paper Julius questioned the validity of a white man's representation of African interests in the LEGCO. He was nearly kicked out of Alliance.

In Makerere, he constantly yearned for a university degree and read biographies of eminent African Americans who had made it in academia and public life like Dr. Aggrey and Booker T. Washington. He also read *Crisis*, a magazine published by the National Association

for the Advancement of Coloured People in America (NAACP) which carried addresses of Black colleges in the U.S.A. He applied and was admitted at Pioneer Business Institute in Philadelphia. But he had no money. It was then that for the first time a Harambee was organized in this country for purely educational purposes. The Kenya African Traders and Farmers Association (KAFTA) led by Mr. Mwaura Ngoima and Mr. Charles Rubia, and others raised the money.

From that time, Dr. Gikonyo Kiano became a staunch believer in Harambee, especially for educational purposes and has tirelessly worked throughout his life to open up opportunities for further education for Kenyan young people. His commitment to the promotion of education is a lifelong undertaking because as he says:- "I was a product of the early events of Harambee".

Julius joined Pioneer Institute in 1948, and then shortly thereafter, Stores College in West Virginia. The following year he got a scholarship to Antioch College, Ohio, where he obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Political Science in 1952.

Before he left Kenya for the U.S.A., Dr. Gikonyo Kiano had heard a word of advice from a senior Kenyan scholar - Mr. Mbiyu Koinange, the first Kenyan to get an M.A.

degree. Mr. Koinange told Kiano, that if he was going to get a degree he must get a Ph.D. because he, Koinange, already had a Master's degree!

At Antioch, the student work programme led him into the UN system where he worked in the Trusteeship Commission dealing with colonies all over the world. The Head of Department at the U.N. was none other than Dr. Ralph Bunche who went on to become the Under Secretary of the United Nations and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Dr. Kiano together with others would later establish a school in honour of Dr. Bunche.

Thanks to his academic excellence, Julius won university honours fellowship to Stanford University, California for a Master's degree in political science and public administration. From Stanford he went to the prestigious University of California at Berkeley where he taught as he worked on his Ph.D., which he obtained in 1956. Thus he became the first Kenyan to get a Ph.D. His doctoral thesis was critical of the idea of a Central and Eastern Federation which he argued was a delaying tactic for the independence of the African countries concerned and a tool for the continued European domination of the region. This showed that Dr. Kiano was already politically alert. Indeed, he spent much of his spare time explaining to groups in the U.S. that the Mau Mau uprising which had



broken out in Kenya was not a tribal uprising but a struggle for independence. This did not go down well with the British Counsel-General in California.

On his return home, though armed with a Ph.D., he was not employed at the then Royal Technical College, the predecessor of this University until his cousin Mr. Muchohi Gikonyo who was a politician personally confronted the Governor Sir Evelyn Baring. This made him the first African lecturer in what was to become the University of Nairobi. Even after employment, the problem of where his children would go to school in a racially segregated Kenya came up. It was then that Dr. Kiano and other uncategorised staff on the College got together to establish Hospital Hill Primary School. Today, the school is one of the best schools in Nairobi.

Julius taught economics and constitutional law. However, he soon plunged into the politics of the liberation of this country when in 1958 he was elected to the Legislative Council defeating his former teacher Mr. Eliud Mathu. His campaign platform was simple: "The British must go, it is time for total independence".

As a Member of Parliament, he travelled a lot. In one of those visits abroad he met Senator J.F. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Sub-Committee on Africa and

the idea of helping young Africans go to the U.S.A. for further studies came up. Senator Kennedy who was to become U.S. President was enthusiastic about it. The seed of the "airlifts" had been sown. Dr. Kiano advised Mr. Tom Mboya to take up the issue with Kennedy. It worked. Dr. Kiano also met Dr. Martin Luther King and broached the idea. Dr. Martin Luther King gave Dr. Kiano six scholarships right away for Kenyan youths.

From 1960 to 1979, Dr. Julius Gikonyo Kiano was steadily elected to Parliament and held many ministerial portfolios. He was instrumental in bringing UNCTAD IV to Kenya in 1974 and he also signed the first expanded Lome Convention in 1975 on behalf of Kenya as the Minister of Commerce and Industry.

In 1993, Dr. Kiano was a founder member of the Kenya United States Association whose main objective is to promote educational opportunities for Kenyans apart from, of course, also promoting business linkages. He is the current Chairman of the Association. He is the local Chairman of an *ad-hoc* committee which is looking into a formal institutional framework between Kenyan Universities (both public and private) and the New York University System.

Dr. Kiano has occasionally given lively lectures



to students in this University. He is currently a member of this University's Council, and until about two weeks ago, he was the Chairman of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation.

The above shows that Dr. Kiano has made outstanding contribution to the development of this nation and we are proud to honour him with the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).