

Meet the Students: Barbara Nasila, TIP Aga Khan

Mombasa

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Barbara Nasila was born in Meru, Kenya, but was raised for the most part of her life in Mombasa. Barbara's mother separated from her father at a young age which placed a large financial burden upon Barbara's mother to provide for her four children. As she moved from house to house to find a place to call home, Barbara went through 11 different schools in the span of 16 years. Whilst this negatively impacted her schooling career, Barbara reflects that it was her mother's perseverance and endurance to single-handedly provide for her family, whilst pushing her children to excel in their academics, that inspired her to study hard in the face of all of this instability.

In 2012 Barbara was selected by the Talent Identification Program at the Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa, and was given a scholarship to pursue her high school studies there. TIP seeks highly motivated students who are in the top 10% of their peer cohort in terms of intellectual ability, and who demonstrate exceptional leadership potential. The program involves a rigorous selection process that seeks outstanding students from around Kenya, inviting them to study at the Academy from Year 6, and meeting the full demonstrated need of all selected students.

During her time at the Academy, Barbara was involved in a number of community service projects, including writing for the school's newspaper, serving as the Events Coordinator for the choir, working as the Outreach Coordinator to raise money to sponsor a small group of girls to attend primary school, and helping to build boreholes in small villages around Mombasa. In addition to all of this community involvement, Barbara also has a keen interest in the arts, drawing and writing poetry in her spare time, whilst also learning to play the guitar.

All of her hard work and dedication culminated in Barbara earning a Mastercard Scholarship to study Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. Whilst at Berkeley, Barbara has been on the board of the Organization of African Students and the Architects in America Student Chapter. In addition to her classes in Architecture, Barbara has enjoyed the flexibility to study varied subjects such as Greek and Roman Myths, and Language and Politics in Southern Africa, which have broadened her horizons and encouraged her to dedicate more time to learning about her own language and culture.

Barbara hopes to use her degree to return to Kenya and contribute to Kenya's Vision 2030, helping to usher in a new generation of architecture that focuses on the safety and stability of structures, whilst preserving the rich architectural history and diversity that is present across the country. She is also a champion of the arts, hoping to encourage more young people to pursue their artistic skills at a professional level, something that they are often discouraged from pursuing in Kenya.

