

## Running for Congress

When I was being raised by my parents in Rose Terrace, a frequent daydream of mine was in running for the Congressional seat in the Kentucky district we lived in.

See, during my childhood there were very few Black political figures, and most of the political figures who were Black were also "written off" as not being able to gather the political might to win an election to Congress. It was during my high school years -- starting in 1973 -- that many of the national figures in the African-American community started their moves.

I read about them in the weekly magazine "Jet".

What fueled my ambitions was running and winning several regional and later national Exploring youth leadership positions. I ran for the presidency of the local Boy Scout Council's Exploring Presidents' Association, or EPA. I was then encouraged the following year to run for the state chairman for Kentucky and Tennessee and won. I then ran for the National Explorer President's position twice and failed both times; but in the process, I captured the attention of the national leadership and was appointed twice to essential roles at the national level.

So, the "political bug" bit me hard.

"If only you had known that as a teenager, that everything you did would be remembered until this time...", Barbara said to me, sitting beside me on the warm couch. She had a newspaper, folded back to the article which contained an in-depth story on me and my political ambitions.

It mentions that I was married before. That I have 10 children, seven which I "finance". How my life was changed when I attempted to prevent a suicide. About my high school days, my college days, my days as a Boy Scout professional, as a teacher, as a salesman.

I provided all of that information to the perky young reporter who came to the home and took several photos.

I was not prepared for the rest.

"Honey," Barbara cooed in her southern Virginia accent, "how will you deal with this?? Did she get everything out of context?"

"Most of it was written out of context, love," I replied to her, pointing to the

formal photo of myself on the page.

"There is a bit of truth to it..."

"Like?" She asked me.

"Like the fact that yes, a girl died while dating me. That part is true," I said, looking at her. "She died, however, after being on a nine-day drunk. She drank herself to death."

"And what about the fact that you have never dated a Black woman?" Barbie looked at my face. "You're not worried about this, Micheal, but look..." She pointed to the photos of me in the paper.

"Your picture is right there for all to see, love...." She pointed to the small photo of me which appeared to come from a jail or prison.

"I have never been arrested, honey. That photo was taken when we had a Sadie Hawkins Dance in high school. We placed these fake plates around our necks and was placed into a "prison" until someone paid for our release."

She looked at the photo.

"How can they do this?? It implies that you were in jail somewhere..."

"Sometimes it isn't the media but my opponents. David or Willie probably found that photo in my high school yearbook and provided it to them. I can get it straightened out...it's a good photo of me, don't you think?" I showed her the photo and smiled.

She smiled back and added, "I like the real thing now, without all of that hair." She kissed me on my left cheek and snuggled in closer.

"What are you doing to do?" she asked, looking at the story. She then paused, and then followed-up.

"And what is this about "if you have to choose your last meal for some reason?" question? What kind of reporter is she??"

"I don't know. I thought the question was like in the line of "what would you do with a million dollars?"...I just wanted to answer her question."

"So...what are you going to do?"

"Nothing. Well," I kissed Barbara's forehead, "I have some ideas but it doesn't involve anyone except you, me and our bedroom back there," I replied, pointing back to the bedroom.