

Meet Mr. Michael D. Harrison

When often asked, “Who are you?” many adjectives come to mind.
I was born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia, where I learned many lessons divine.

Lesson # 1:

Never allow your circumstances to dictate your destiny.

Even though I grew up poor, I was always pushed to succeed.
My mom and grandparents were right behind me whenever I was in need

C’s and D’s were unacceptable and an F would be a crime
Doing my homework and studying hard was how I spent my time.
And so I made the honor roll almost every grading cycle.
From pre-K to the twelfth grade, my textbooks were like my bible.

Now, I also did those other things any kid my age would do
but those things like acting a fool or cutting class were often very few
Because I came from a household whose mama did not play
It wasn’t strange or abnormal to catch a butt-whooping any time of the day.

Through it all I survived and became a better young man
So that when I graduated from Maury High School, my four-year plan began.
I moved from Virginia to Georgia to attend the prestigious Morehouse College.
It was during those exciting yet trying years I gained some grown folk knowledge.

Lesson # 2:

To thine ownself be true.

Party over here! Party over there!
My freshman year was like a do or dare.

Do I study for this exam and begin drafting my research paper?
Or do I dare party with my boys and hit the books later?
Do I sign up for this credit card so that I can shop like a balla?
Or do I find and work a part-time job to help my debt grow smaller?

Decisions. Decisions. I would now have to make
And the consequences were not so insignificant
because they helped to determine my fate

You see, I enjoyed the absolute freedom of being on my own
But I soon realized it took much responsibility and hard work to be grown
So that by the end of my freshman year I had finally figured it out
Maintaining a balance of activities was what college was all about.

You can go to all the parties and attend every social event,
Just as long as you keep your academics at the top of your to-do list.

The next three years I continued to excel in my studies.
Every semester I made the Dean’s List unlike some of my buddies.

I also became heavily involved with different projects in the community.
As a Bonner Scholar and college mentor, helping others became my duty.

I particularly enjoyed volunteering at this inner-city elementary school.
There, I ran an enrichment program, the kids thought was pretty cool.
Then toward the end of my senior year, it was time to make that critical decision.
What career path should I take? What is my professional vision?

I knew I wanted to do something great, something profound with my life
Something that would save the world, help the poor and end all global strife
So as an English major, I looked into pursuing law or possibly journalism
But deep down inside of me, neither career was I really feelin'

Then one day, a friend of mine told me about an awesome opportunity
Providing minority students with an excellent education and helping them to succeed

TeachforAmerica! TeachforAmerica became my next new commitment.
Teaching two years in an urban school setting seemed to be just the right fit
So I applied and was accepted into this competitive, rigorous program.
But when I found out I was assigned to Houston, I thought, "Excuse me ma'm!"

Houston, we do have a problem because I've never lived that far away.
No family. No friends. No car. No job. I didn't even have a place to stay.
But that's just how life sometimes will throw you a curve ball or two
Regardless of the situation, do know that God will always see you through.

Lesson # 3:

Tough times don't last. Tough people do.

Sixth Grade Language Arts at Hogg Middle School was my first teaching assignment
I was given the oldest and lowest achieving students, the ones every teacher would vent
about
how lazy they were, how bad they behaved, how many tests they failed
Some teachers didn't even bother to reach them because
they believed they would never excel

But I had a different belief system in mind
Because I knew that gradually it would take some time
To mold them into the high-achieving students they could be
And take them places their minds never dreamt they would see.

And so I continued my year-long quest
Determined to teach them and showcase their best

There were times when they outright refused to learn
But failure was not an option, so my gas I would burn
As I drove to their houses to inform parents of the situation
To see the look on student faces when I arrived without invitation...

Some teachers thought I was crazy to be going so late at night
And I had to let my students know that those teachers were exactly right.

“Yes, I’m crazy. I know...because you’ve got to do the work in my class.
All this forgetting to bring your supplies or homework will not help you pass!”

Eventually the students began to rise and meet my high expectations
They began to understand the value of obtaining a quality education.
By Year 2, I had already developed the esteemed reputation
As being the “toughest and hardest working” teacher without reservation

I enjoyed teaching so much that I decided to stay
“Year 3 will be a breeze.” I thought, until one dark November day
when my principal informed me that she needed my expertise
There was this unruly group of 7th graders who put their teacher on medical leave

And so came her alarming, ominous, and dreadful decision
I was going to be moved mid-year into that English teacher’s position
“Why me? Why me? What did I do to deserve this?”
“Mr. Harrison, you can handle it.” said Ms. Crowe, “We know it’ll be worth the risk.”

Even though I was mad and disappointed about my sudden new assignment
I began to move beyond my emotions and told myself not to quit
I swallowed my pride, took on the challenge, and gave those students my best
When the results came back in April, almost everyone passed their tests

That pivotal year taught me that tough times don’t last forever.
It’s during these opportunities of tests and trials that work to make you better.
By Year 5, I would be reassigned once again to teach 8th Grade Reading.
Some of the students I taught before so I knew exactly what they would be needing.

Oh how we worked and learned and studied and worked and learned and grew!
By the end of their 8th grade year, they feared I would be following them to 9th grade too.
But my season was up at Hogg, and so it was time for a new career transition.
That summer, when Dr. Parker offered me the job, I gladly accepted this position.

In my second year at Burbank, as the Vanguard Coordinator,
My territory has been expanded, my impact to be much greater
I really enjoy working with the best and the brightest
I guess I’m sort of G/T myself and can not really deny this

So to define me in a word or phrase may only give you a snapshot.

I am a visionary
leader,
educator,
and winner.

♫ This is why I’m hot! ♫

I want the best for my teachers, parents and students.
I push myself to give them “100% with No Excuses!”