
Why I Will Always Support My Big Brother

My name is Michael Francis. Surviving on my mid-twenties in this life where we live on hope because tomorrow is never assured. Living life daily is what I do and whatever means I use to put bread on my young family's table does not bother me. The means do not justify the end to me, it's rather the survival that matters. What do I got to do when jobs are a scarcity? Nothing really to write home about, it's the same old routines in these streets.

I was brought up in the projects. We survived in a one-bedroom apartment with my parents and my three adorable siblings. Pretty much a small place for six heads to fit. We were equally distributed, but as the third child, I felt neglected and surely did not get the attention I yearned for. I topped my class in school and gained admission to high school where all hell went loose. My demons awakened and all the shine that I possessed was dully overshadowed by the dark wave. Pretty much a damn and melancholic way for a bright boy to lose his shine. Everything, I mean everything went haywire! I turned to a rebel with no cause but deep down that childlike soul was still alive and kicking.

Everything happened too fast for my loved ones to comprehend. In high school, I joined my peers and practically did every vice that one could ever imagine. Little did I know that all these were detrimental to my wellbeing. I abused drugs from cocaine, heroin, cannabis and crystal meth. I was an extremist in all of these. Nevertheless, I managed to clear my high school but did not get good grades to take me to the university. Pretty damned I was! I bitterly accepted that this was my life. I was introduced to life in the streets too early to my knowing and barely two years on I was a father. Responsibility was calling. No college degree to show in these demanding contemporary world. "If a college degree still doesn't hold any water in this competitive market, so what about my average high school certificate?" I pondered. Survival was the only pathway to take. My two elder siblings landed lucrative jobs in well-renowned corporations and my younger sibling had just exemplarily cleared her high school awaiting admission to the university. "Was I the rotten egg in the lot?" I thought to myself.

My parents paid little attention to my woes, I was all by myself. Here I was a father at nineteen years old with no job, hanging around these mean streets of Queensbridge. I sold drugs just to make sure my family had something to eat. Trouble followed me everywhere as I lived a mysterious life. Now I have served several sentences in jail, coming back later only to find myself doing the same old deeds. Fast-forward, its several years later my daughter is six years old visiting me on this state penitentiary in the capital accompanied by her my wife and my youngest sibling.

Michael is my brother, my older sibling. He was my role model as I grew up. A friend indeed, we were very close to each other and we shared our little secrets. We even made promises to each other never to conceal our secrets to anyone. Such was our sibling bond. It was hard to break and our loyalty to each other was second to none. Our relationship deteriorated and all was because of Michael's reserved personality. Growing up he was such a shy guy to an extent where girls were the ones who made moves on him.

As he got older he became a more and more reserved character. He would now do stuff on his

own and never involve me at all. It was like something was eating up from the inside. The problem is he never shared his plights with anyone, not even me. From a distance, I could tell that he was feeling neglected and rather his issues were left unattended. That's all I could conclude for my trouble stricken brother. It was evident that the glow once effervescent in him was now diminishing and he had lost hope entirely with the ones he once loved.

Here I am in this state penitentiary reminiscing the good old days we had with him while envisioning how our future together would look like. It was clear that the good old Michael's charisma was still present. A sentiment of regret dawned on me, "what if I was more caring and paid attention to his pleas?" I asked myself. He was not the kind of guy people depicted him to be. He had all the good and endearing elements everyone would want from a brother, a son or even a friend. Michael was one of a kind, I mean he was a rare gem that despite the roller-coaster rides in his life, he still possessed the attributes of an ideal brother. I mean he was kind, generous, overly witty and above all a man of refreshing candor.

Psychology stresses that we are not the same, as human beings, some judge and others understand. He was the understanding type, he never even once rebuked or condemned me for my mistakes and childish ways. He would rather aim to help me clear my messes. He was more than a brother, more than a keeper. Perhaps words would be a vague reflection of the type of man he is. Only feelings would do; which sometimes are impossible to relay to strangers.

Now here we sit in the visitation desk, a month before his release, wondering where the hell I was all that while. But despite all my misdoings and shameful regrets, he doesn't hold grudges; Michael is never resentful, he is peace-loving and a forgiving man. So despite all the odds and scrutiny he is facing, I stand by him. "Hey Maggy!" that was the first utterance from his mouth. That little nickname took me back to the good old days where we were like a chariot and the reins. Truth is we were inseparable. I would expect that after abandoning him and leaving him all by himself he would be reluctant or even I was not worthy anymore to his existence. I was wrong, he was gentler, subtler and more charming than he ever was, Michael was Michael. He was the brother I knew and he never ceased to be so.