

Channell Barbour

Heyyy All

For those of you who do not know me, I am, as introduced, Dr. Channell Barbour, Associate Dean of Student Life

For those of you who do know me, know that it takes me at least 3 minutes to get into a good story, and today I'm being asked to start and finish within 3 minutes. Talk about pressure, and now since I have used up **(20 seconds)** I better get this story going.

My Journey to Berea began before August 1987, when I was a student attending Oldham County High School in Oldham County, Kentucky.

While Oldham County has a reputation of being the wealthiest county in Kentucky, **let's not get it twisted** that this farm girl came from money. Just the opposite.

I did come from a two parent home where I was raised by a father, who is a disabled **World War** II Veteran, and a mother who not only raised her 7 kids (I being the youngest), but took in two other kids into our home. **Why not?** She was already cooking meals for a large family- what's two more mouths to feed.

I was raised during a time where the world was starting to feel the impact of the Civil Rights Movement. In our household, it meant that we had access to education & job opportunities whereas, my sisters and brothers would go to either Technical Schools and learn a trade; go to the military, or go to college, earn a degree, and get a good paying job.

For me, I had no option but to go to college, as my dad informed me. I wanted to go to the military, the Air Force to be specific, but these things on my face (glasses) and my dad stopped that dream. Where am I to go?

My high school counselor, who shall remain nameless and I will say, **"Bless Her Heart,"** told me that I was not college material and that I should go to cosmetology school. First of all, I remember blankly starring at her, having no idea what that was, and second, no offense to anyone in that profession, as I know that is the education my own hair stylist received that makes **me look good**. Anyhow, I did not want to go that route.

Luckily, I received an invitation to attend an Appreciation Day at a nearby college. WOW! This college actually knew me and wanted to "appreciate" me. I had not even applied, but I was going with my mom, dad, grandmother and one of her friends in tow, to attend this luncheon and hear about this college.

Well, was I sadly disappointed. I was correct in the fact that this place did not know me, but was trying to fulfill a quota. I felt like the token and that I was the only one they tried to recruit, except the African American male who was recruited to play basketball. Talk about stereotypes.

Feeling as though I did not belong, my mother, in her affirmative way had already informed me about a college that was near and dear to her heart. This college, not only was the first in the south to educate whites and blacks, but males and females during an unprecedented time. Additionally, the school had very close ties to her alma mater, Lincoln Institute- a boarding school that was created by the Board of Trustees of this special college, to allow black students to continue their education once the horrific Day Law was passed.

As fate would have it, a man from the Admissions Office of Berea College called my house. I had no knowledge of him, but he knew of me. REALLY, HE DID! Somewhere he and GOD connected, and the two changed my life.

He wanted me and my parents to visit the college. His name was Mr. Virgil Burnside Mr. Burnside, please stand up . . . **quickly**, you know I am on a time schedule. He is now the VP of Student Life, and he has continued to be a mentor to me. Now settle down, my time is probably up, and I have just one last point to drive home.

So, I came, and at Berea, I became a Political Science major. It was here where I met another man Dr. Michael Berheide. I won't go into any horror stories about him, I will let you experience him and the Political Science department for yourself. But what I will tell you is that he, the Political Science Department, Mr. Burnside, and Berea College helped shape me into the person I am today, From being told I was not college material by my high school counselor, I stand before you as a Berea College graduate, with a PhD, who is Associate Dean of Student Life, with dreams of becoming Berea College president someday. That is my Berea story.