

T.V. star: A self reflection

By Nyewusi Askari

(Editor's Note: This is the second part of the *Observer's* interview with T.V. star Michael Roberts)

Observer: You spoke earlier of how dreams and goals can disappear. Will you tell us how you pulled your goals and dreams together?

Roberts: They had all disappeared. Er...it really came in making the decision to turn it around. That's the point. It's one of the things we do in our *Right Track* program. We define the word decision. We actually ask the kids if they have ever made a decision; what would it be like to make a decision...get them to realize that they actually made a decision this morning when they decided to have Wheat Chex, instead of Wheaties...how basic it is when they decided to wear a green shirt instead of the blue one.



It came down to making a decision, and when I made the decision, I said, "Hey" you know, it's like I was sitting in a room one night smoking Panama Red, gone, you know what I mean? And I just said, "Wait a minute man, this ain't it." At that point, I decided to turn it around and it was an uphill climb. I was doing it by myself. I am an Scientologist now, so that makes it easier. I have a group with me now and it helps clear up a lot of the haze that was in my space at one time. But making the decision was the first part of it.

I had to make the decision to succeed in life, and I made the decision against all kinds of odds.

Observer: What was your life like before you made the decision?

Roberts: Well, what it basically involved was a lotta lost days and lost nights. A lot of my time, I don't know where it went to...smoking weed everyday. Er...whatever the drug was I was doing at the time, that was really the focal point. Who would I get it from, what was I going to get, how high I was going to get, how long it was going to keep me high and when I came down, where was I going to find the next stuff at. That was really the focal point. My goals and dreams had greatly disappeared. So to change, it really involved the decision of saying, "Hey, that's it on the stuff. I have had it with the drugs."

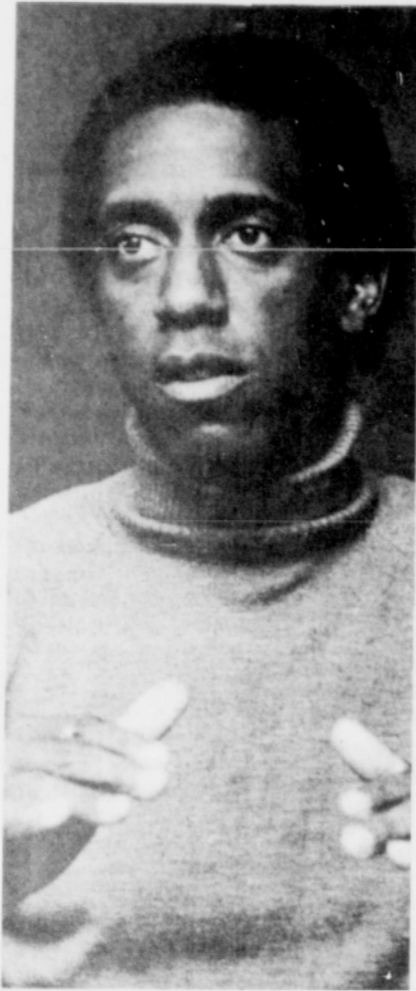
What I really said was, "Hey, I am going to achieve my goals." I didn't say to my friends I'm not going to see you anymore, or to any of the cats I was hanging with, "I'm not going to do this or that anymore. Instead, what I just said was, "I'm fixing to start moving toward my goals again." In doing that, everything that had nothing to do with succeeding, just sort of fell off to the side.

That is why I brought up the subject of my religion. It puts at a point where I am around people who aren't into drugs, who are moving toward their goals, and who are winning.

Like a good friend of mine, Stanley Clarke, said something the other day that really stuck. And this was relating back to the days when he was getting high. He said that he

got loaded one day and did a recording session. Later, the next day, he listened to it and asked, "who is that playing?" The reply was, "You." And he said, "That's not me!" and it was at that point, he said bye to drugs. Now, Stanley and I are real close. He is one of our Board of Directors of *Right Track*. It's that sort of thing, having someone on the same wave length with you.

You see, kids, as far as they are concerned, have good reasons for taking drugs. They want to get along, wants to be accepted, wants to be cool. And I can remember how, when I was on drugs, it became easier to handle certain things that I couldn't handle when I wasn't loaded. I use to have hell with women, but when I got loaded, I would slide up to them, "Hey mama what's happening with you?" You know what I mean? If I wasn't loaded I would get in a corner and shut up! So, the kids have their own reasons, so you can't come to them and say, "Hey man, don't do this...hey get off the stuff." You have to give them a good reason. We relate to them through people. Now like, if Rooster ain't doing it,



if O.J. Simpson ain't doing it, if Travolta ain't doing it, and we are having a good time winning big, all of a sudden it means something to the kids not to be on drugs.

I did one school in Los Angeles, in Watts. We had over 1200 kids there and I broke down and finally said, "Look man, why is it so cool for Black folk to be tripping around the street loaded on drugs? Why is that? We are in this society trying to come up, why is it so cool to be tripping. Who said it was cool...George Washington, who?" And four seconds went by and all of a sudden the students started clapping and cheering. It blew me away, cuz I use to live in the neighborhood. I knew the school. Its like, if you weren't ready to kick butt, you walked around like this. (Made humpback gestures). I ran into one of the kids not long ago, working at a shoe store. He said, "I remember you. You came to our school and gave a talk on drugs. It was really together." I could see without anyone telling me, that this kid had his thing together.

Observer: Have you done any Theater lately?

Roberts: I did "A Raisin In The

Sun." I did it with my wife and my son.

Observer: Tell us something about your wife.

Roberts: My wife is an actress. We met in my acting class. Matter of fact, er...the late Lillian Randolph, she just passed away, was one of my acting coaches, and she hooked me and my wife up. She was like cupid. She use to give us these love scenes (my wife and I) and my wife was so funny cuz when I would throw a kiss on her, she would laugh, so I guess I had to marry her to get a serious kiss out of her.

We have been together for a long time, altho we just got married in 1976. We had one of those off and on relationships where we was sort of with each other, then wasn't and then we got to the point where we decided to get serious and get married. Its' been a real gas since that point. She is an incredible actress. I mean, she's really, really good.

I had been wanting to do "A Raisin In The Sun" for a long time because I worship the show. The drama and human elements are heavy. And I wanted my son to do it with us, so I asked him and he said,

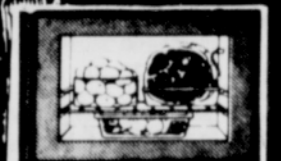
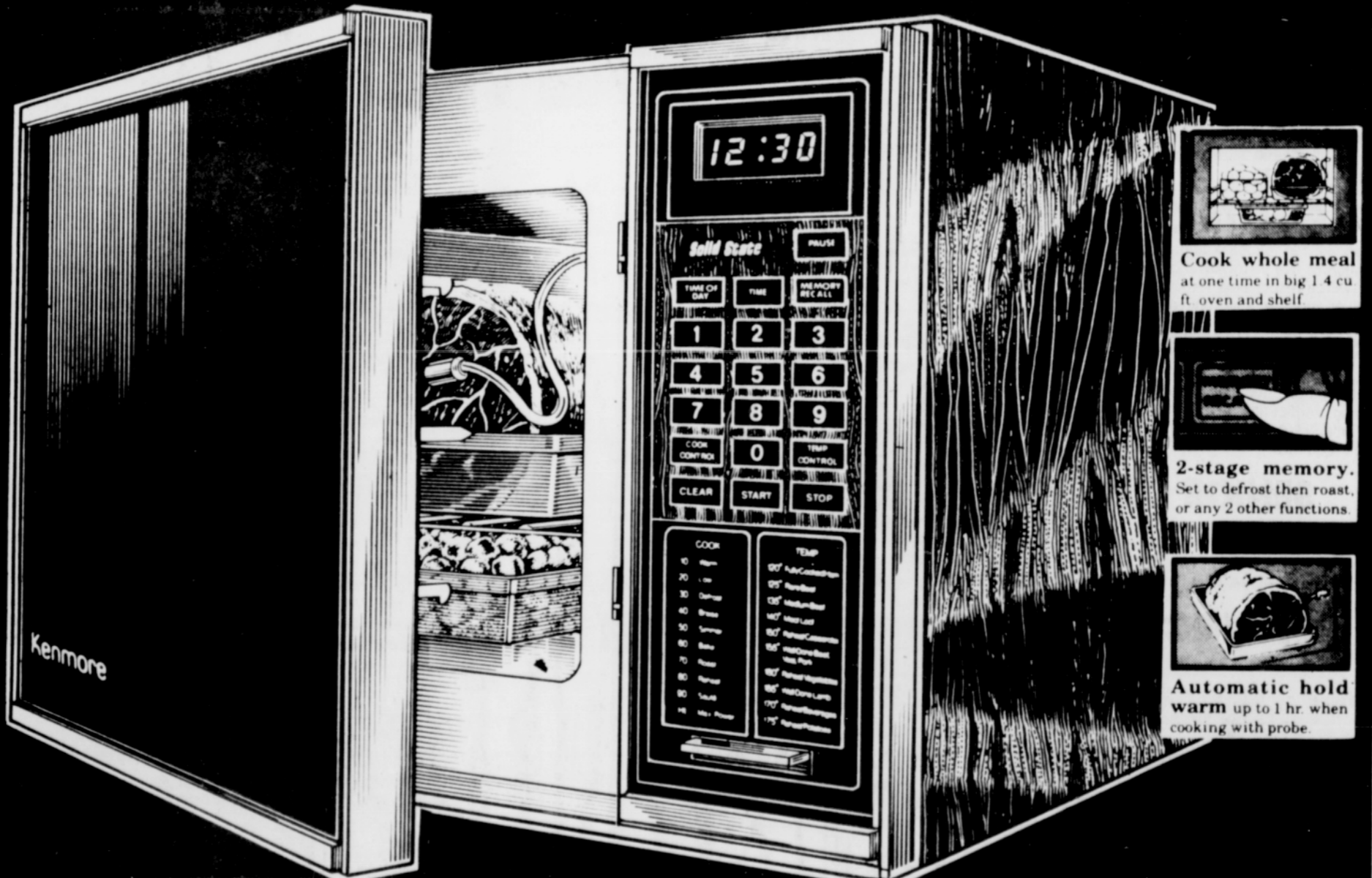


"Yeah, sure." He wants to be a football player, but he got into it with us, and we worked and did it for six weeks. It was really successful. It brought us closer together as a family.

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