#BACKFIRED

A communications plan built to reinvigorate and legitimize the Micheal Dukakis presidential campiagn after a truly unfortunate photoshoot.

MEJO 244 | Group 2

Some Context...

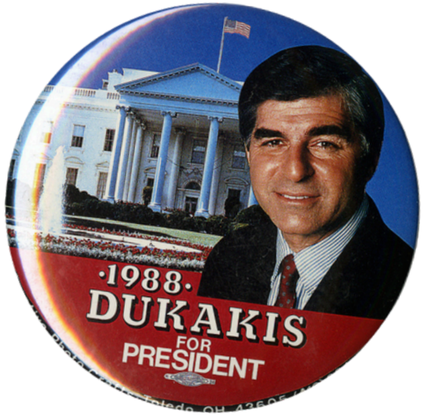
- 1988 Presidential Election
- One of the biggest challenges the Dukakis campaign faced was questions like...
  - Is Dukakis weak on crime?
  - Does Dukakis know enough about foreign policy?
  - Would Dukakis make a good “Commander in Chief”?
- The campaign team organized a tour of the East Coast, planning to address a lot of these challenges through speeches
- As part of the PR package, they wanted to include a photo to accompany the messaging, inspired by Margaret Thatcher
- Dukakis would later say that not responding to Bush’s subsequent attack campaign was likely the main reason he lost
- 2028 Adapation: Vance vs. Dukakis
  - Under the assumption that the Iran war is still going on











SOOOOOOO...

THIS WAS BORN


MIKE DUKAKIS

OUR PLAN

Goals | Message | Audience



3 primary goals

- Shape public opinion about the photo.
    - Capitalize on the heightened coverage and take control of the narrative.
- Frame Dukakis as SAFE for Americans.
    - Saftey > strength, force, tough
- And.. DUH win the election



2 main messages

Intended for our potential voters...

You can take Dukakis seriously as well as place your trust in him to keep you safe.

Intended for our opponents...

A singular photo is not representative of one's military leadership nor their integrity in crafting adequate foreign policy.



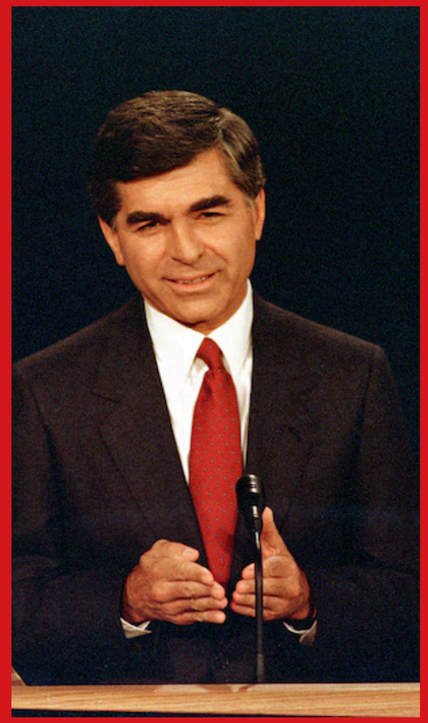
2 key audiences

- 30 - 55 year old moderate voters who can be swayed into voting Dukakis.
    - Predominately serious messaging that enforces safety and American strength in Dukakis.
- Young men and boys.
    - More comedic messaging that capatilizes on the "fifteen minutes of fame" Dukakis gets on their screens.

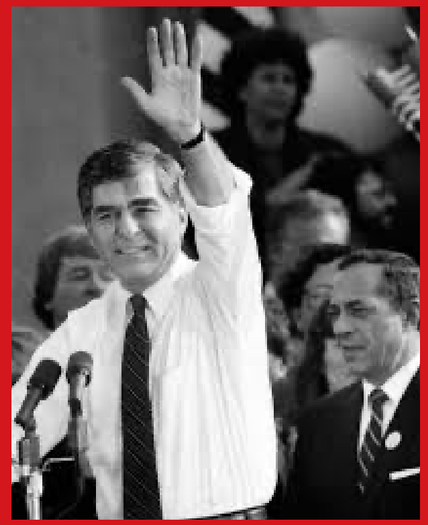
Tactics to Implement

Dukakis will present as able to laugh at himself and make light of a bad photo, but serious about the issues that matter.

- General demeanor
- Public statement on X
- MSNBC appearance
- Comedy forward social media posts
- If prompted... response to opponents
- AD campaign featuring veterans









The Statement

01.

“We’ve all seen the photo, campaign life isn’t a staged photoshoot, and that’s kind of the point! What matters is what was actually happening: a tour from Philadelphia to Raleigh focused on strengthening national security, supporting our troops, and making sure America is prepared on the world stage. our campaign is focused on the bigger picture: steady leadership, real priorities, and keeping America safe.”

Micheal Dukakis via X



Response to oppostion

Response to statements that Dukakis is weak on war

“I believe in protecting the American people by building better foreign relations that advance our national interests. I also intend to ensure that taxpayer funds are spent improving the lives of every American.”

Response to Dukakis is weak on crime

As governor of Massachusetts, I supported policies that reduced crime while also upholding fairness and justice. Public safety means investing in effective law enforcement, supporting communities, and addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty and lack of opportunity. I believe we can protect our neighborhoods without abandoning our values, and I will continue to pursue policies that make Americans both safer and more secure in the long term.

Response to Dukakis looking silly in the tank

Yes, the photo was a misguided decision. However, my reasoning behind it still stands. I want the American people to know I am dedicated to ensuring public safety both at home and overseas. I will continue by discussing with our nation's top military professionals and dedicate my time to uplifting and protecting the health of our nation.

Comms Plan Timline

The timing of our release of communications materials is key to maintaining the perfect balance between light-hearted and serious.

Directly following - 2 months post photo

- The release our X statement
- MSNBC appereance

3 - 5 months post photo

- We begin to post comedic forward social media targeted at specifically young men and boys
- Our messaging towards middle-aged voters remains serious.

6 - 12 months post photo

- Well timed comedic social media posts geared to all audiences

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Plan:

- Instagram and Facebook “Rally Wrap Ups”
- A little blurb filling in viewers on what happened at each rally.
- Pictures of Dukakis interacting with potiental voters.
- Captions include “thank you” messages to each city and its people. Captions recap the event and its success’s.
- Caption example : Philly today! I am a Boston man, but it would be a lie to say I haven’t fallen in love with Philly. This city and the wonderful people here welcomed me for when of the best rallys we have had. I spoke out my foreign policy plans, my intentions for the war that currently plagues our country, and overall my promise to these people to keep them safe. I love you Philly!!

Visual Concept:





Plan:

- Veteran exclusive meet up content in each city we have a rally in.
- Instagram reels, Instagram and Facebook posts.
- Pictures of Dukakis interacting with local veterans in each city.
- Warm hearted captions
- Caption example : Every conversation with a veteran is a master class in courage, humility, and service. They remind us what truly matters - community, commitment, and looking out for one another. Thank you to the veterans who have pavbed the way and continue to inspire me and you every single day. Your examples, stories, and wisdom make us all better. Today and every day we listen we learn and we are grateful.

Visual Concept:





Plan:

- Replacing my boss's pictures in his office with pictures of tanks everyday until he notices Tik Tok series.
- Counting downs until the presidential debate.
- A Gen Z intern sneaks into Dukakis's office every day and subtly replaces a picture in a frame with a picture of a tank.
- Call to action at the end, tune into the debate on this day at this time.

Visual Concept:









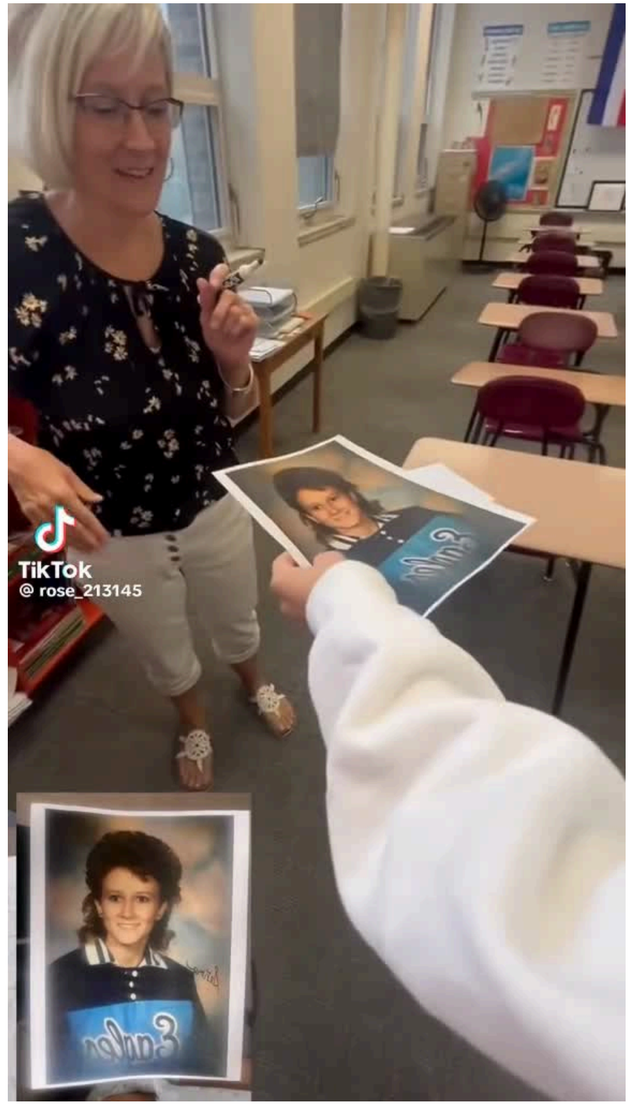
Plan:

- Tik Tok autograph an old picture of yourself trend
- Gen Z intern is filming Dukakis as he is like walking to his office. The interns asks Dukakis for his autograph and hands him an upside down piece of paper and a sharpie.
- Dukakis takes the paper, flips it over, and sees it’s the tank photo.
- He looks at the camera, Keke Palmer sound clip … “I don’t know who this man is”
- Call to action at the end inviting viewers to Dukakis’s next rally.

Visual Concept:







Plan:

- Twitch stream
- This one is specifically for the young men and boys
- First, he plays something alone and interacts with other users, implicitly talks about policy. He comes across as fun, sociable friendly, and a role model for young men.
- He plays some other popular games with other poltical influencers, allies, and politicians.
- All along, implicity policy and “vote for me”, explicit “wow Dukakis is a good guy”.

Visual Concept:









TANK YOU!

