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George Washington Carver

Introduction

George Washington Carver was a man of impressive intellect. However, in learning of the great adversity he faced in his educational pursuit, we can have a greater knowledge of the difficulty we might have faced if our births had taken place a century and a half earlier. To fully understand and appreciate the details of Carver's learning – and indeed, our own as well – we need to take a comprehensive look at the very details of his life and the culture surrounding him. His life was one of various struggles and hardships, but George overcame them with hard work, dedication, fantastic mind power, and perseverance. His story is one of great inspiration and many of us in the present can find a way to relate it to our everyday lives.

History

George Washington Carver was born in Diamond, Missouri in either 1864 or 1865. A precise date is not currently known, but what is certain is that he was born into slavery. When he was an infant, he and much of his family were kidnapped by “night raiders.” They were then sold again in Kentucky. The slave-owners that formerly held George and his family sent for their retrieval, but were only able to recover the young George. Soon after the incident, however, slavery had been abolished and George was raised in the care of his former masters who taught

him to read and write. After experiencing school near his hometown, the Carvers' George moved to another the home of another family in Kansas and continued to pursue his education. By the 1880s, George was attempting to enter college but was never fully accepted – getting closest when he was able to enroll in a college but was rejected upon sight because of his race.

Following these events, George set up a claim with his own home that had land for planting. He manually worked his own fields and helped support himself by performing various tasks for the people in town nearby. Near the end of the decade, he was able to get a loan for three-hundred dollars which he used to attend school in Iowa. At first, he studied art and piano, but when his teacher noticed that he had a gift in planting, she encouraged him to study botany at an Iowa state college. Here, he was the first black student, and following that, he was the first black teacher there. He completed a Bachelor's of Science degree at the college and was encouraged to complete his Master's degree, as well. Following another two years of study, he received general recognition for his research in the field of botany. In 1896, he began a career teaching at the Tuskegee Institute. His skills and knowledge would help keep him there for another forty-seven years. He had a lot of information and subjects to teach and provided inspiration for black students of the time to study under him. Due to his many successes and the expertise he had attained, he was afforded many more amenities than existing staff members, including a second room at the college, a higher salary, and the ability to chose what he taught. Showing his superior knowledge, he and other contemporaries advised the re-institution of nitrogen to farmers' soils for more efficient growing of crops. This was to be achieved by a system of crop rotation. The soils had been drained by farmers repeatedly planting cotton crops, but the rotation system was to alternate between cotton and other crops such as peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soybeans. His work also extended into the laboratory – Carver's oldest research

experience – where he and other researchers studied the various uses of the alternate crops that were becoming so successful. This research was crucial to adding more success on his already well-established career. Undoubtedly, the work he is most famous for is the work he did on the peanut. He studied various uses, and even wrote to a peanut company in order to explain various uses for the crop yield. His knowledge on the subject gained him the role of public speaker at the 1920 United Peanut Associations of America convention, where his talk was on “The Possibilities of the Peanut” and he used one-hundred and forty-five different examples of peanut products he had devised. Along with amassing vast amounts of knowledge, he even helped to save the entire American peanut industry. In 1921, representatives of the peanut industry and farmers themselves asked George to testify on behalf of them in order to convince The United States government to provide them with a tariff that would help them combat the cheaper Chinese peanut crop yields. This was an unprecedented event, as it was very rare that an African-American would provide an expert testimony in United States court. But the committee before which he spoke passed the Fordney-McCumber Tariff of 1922 that included a clause on imported peanuts. Following his testimony, George Washington Carver was revered with a moderate celebrity status. His fame gave him the opportunity to meet with three different presidents of The United States, and provide business advice for various established executives. His life is the perfect example of hard work and reward and he deserves to be greatly respected and emulated for generations to come.

Purpose

I think it can be easily argued that George Washington Carver's greatest purpose in life was to receive an education. Luckily, from the time he was a young boy – recently freed from slavery – he was encouraged to educate himself by those close to him. Unfortunately, many

others were not as supportive, and some were even downright racist in their dealings with the young man who simply wanted to learn. Another gravely unfortunate aspect of the time period was that, although slavery had been abolished, racism was still quite rampant. The first place to do away with racism was the federal government itself, but, without power over state legislature, they were powerless to stop racism in certain areas of the country. And so, whenever Carver managed to prove himself worthy, able, and eager to learn everything he could, he then had to leave it behind in pursuit of more knowledge, starting the whole process over and having to prove himself in his new surroundings.

George Washington Carver's achievements in academics did have to wait for a time, though. When he was turned away from his first university, he instead settled onto his recently-purchased farmland. Here, his purpose to succeed – which played a big part in his greater purpose to learn – went a long way in assisting him in making a living and providing for himself. He worked his own fields, worked as a ranch hand for another rancher, and performed various odd jobs in the town nearby in order to supplement his income.

Soon after this, though, George applied for and received a three-hundred dollar loan which he used to return to his educational passions. At first, he was driven into art and music studies, but it is said that his instructor noticed how well he had worked with plants and recommended he move toward a degree in that field. Carver's abilities opened up doors for him and his skills contributed to the education he would receive in plant biology, philology, and horticulture. By the time he had completed his Bachelor's Degree of Science, he was encouraged even more and pushed toward his Master's degree. As previously stated, he was incredibly lucky to receive the support and encouragement that he did, but he was very remarkable in his drive and purpose to learn, and that's what motivated him and propelled him forward when he was in

the face of no supporting people and situations of the time period.

This sort of drive can be related to by a wide variety of the public, including myself. For years now, I have been incredibly unsure as to what I want to do with my life, but after putting off college for far too long, I finally came to the realization that – whatever I do later in my life – I want to have learned as much as possible, and I want to continue learning through my entire existence. Knowledge and education are absurdly wasted or even wholeheartedly rejected too often in today's world. I, for one, can find no other concept as heinous and ridiculous as that. The power to learn is one of mankind's greatest abilities and it should not be cast aside in any sense – and, to me, the greatest legacy of George Washington Carver is that we can feel so strongly about our struggle to educate ourselves and I feel it is something that, if it were more prominent in the world, would make such a man incredibly proud of today's society.

Argument

George Washington Carver was truly a man of great motivation and talent, let alone his amazing bravery and personal intellect. For an African-American man to pursue an education so involved and – at the time – considered to be above his class is astounding. I believe that this shows Carver's amazing courage, as well as his fantastical ambition to finally be amongst his intellectual peers and, above all else, learn all that he could. George Washington Carver embodied many splendid attributes that all humans should aspire to attain. His education was one of the great successes to be had within 19th century America and the entire world and is definitely something that should have happened for the betterment of society.

If George Washington Carver had not attained the high level of education that he gained, the shock waves would be felt even now in the modern world and the global situation would have been deterred for many years to come. For one, his will and his intelligence paved massive

roads for *any* underprivileged member of society and proved to be an absolutely *essential* element of inspiration to those of us that weren't lucky enough to be wealthy, privately educated from our youth, or granted a higher status from birth. And beyond that, African-Americans saw him as a beacon of hope at the time of his success, and I hope this sentiment remains in place today.

But to have achieved so much before becoming moderately famous is one thing that inspired many during his time as an instructor (at the college where he had proved so brilliantly the power and ability he possessed), and is something that inspires many of us in the world today. Imagine if you were a young African-American student under Carver's tutelage during the late 1800s. After proving yourself willing to succeed and declaring yourself eminently capable to achieve that much sought after success in life and learning, if there was a moment's doubt in your head about whether or not you could actually perform adequately, or even surpass adequacy completely, the sheer image of your African-American professor would inspire hope and courage in your mind and heart. If after even *that*, you still carried doubts; his incredible intellect would quash all apprehension. Such things did happen at this time, and many African-American students received the education they so desired.

Now consider his name and status after achieving the fame he had during the early twentieth century. Such an underprivileged person as described above might still have doubt in their mind as to how they could succeed in life. But George Washington Carver was still a shining beacon of hope even late in his years as he was. With more than half a century of great acumen and acuity under his belt by the late stages of his life, a person could look back on the strength he must have exhibited under such unwarranted persecution and be profoundly moved. This kind of life picture not only provides one with an unrest animus to change the world in the

name racial equality, but also an impetus to create a better future for oneself in that newly sculpted world of social tolerance.

Relation: Zak Basta

George Washington Carver's life very much speaks to me as the sort of existence that is based almost completely around education and the pursuit of knowledge. This is how I would describe my own life, as well. There are definitely things around me that I find important, i.e. my personal relationships, how I make my livelihood, etc., but I would probably say that my true leisure is learning something new and challenging myself to retain the information in this fast-paced digital age. Now, of course Carver didn't have to deal with the pace of life hindering his ability to learn, but he did have to deal with quite a few other, more dangerous and life-threatening hindrances.

George Washington Carver persevered through racial inequality and unrest (at the height of it, no less). But this was only the basic issue he was forced to tackle. You see, because slavery had been abolished *only* when George was a young child, it was still a heated issue, to say the least. But that led to his being denied entrance to schools, and people disliking him wherever he tried to learn. Even after completing his schooling, George still had to put up with persecution on a daily basis. One would think that if they had excelled in collegiate academics and completed a degree that their efforts would be vindicated. But that was not always the case. He did, however, receive a position as an instructor at the facility where he'd achieved so much already. To me, that would be a fantastic gift. I think George felt that way, as well. But around him there were still quite a few people who resented his position and his achievements. Now, in an effort to compound upon the things I stated previously, supposing that one had achieved all of the things that George had achieved before becoming an instructor, I think it can be agreed that *anyone*

should be impressed. But now suppose that you are a young black student who has just completed that degree – in a scientific field, no less – and it's the tail-end of the nineteenth century, you've battled persecution your whole life and still made it this far, *and* you are now the first instructor of your race at this college that has given you so much, *and* you are an inspiration to many people across culture, race, class, and other social dividers. If all that is true about one, I feel that person deserves the utmost respect one can afford them.

I find that the elements of George's life and his academic pursuits are a bit too familiar to me. Now, of course I don't put up with racism on a daily basis. I can only be appreciative of the fact that I live in modern times. But I do have to contend with class-ism and (lack of) wealth-ism on a moment-to-moment basis. I constantly feel judged, ridiculed, and ultimately passed over because of my lack of wealth and my lower class in society. I feel that I do not receive the opportunities that might be afforded to others with the same qualifications as me, but with the added bonus of being from wealthy parents. This sort of world view only serves to propel me forward into the areas of life in which I want to succeed. I think George must have felt a similar sort of ire that pushed him forward in life. It may sound improper (but being that I am from a lower class, I couldn't care less about that, now could I?), but I enjoy the irony of people trying to keep me down while their efforts in that particular area of life only serve to boost my own levels of success as I soar past them in their complacent and mediocre existences and into the stratosphere of where I want to be.

To me, this man is the ultimate in personal achievement. George had a passion in knowledge and learning. He found something he was able to do really well and he did it. He then continued in the vein of his love in science and taught young students while performing experiments in his laboratory. Every moment in his life was devoted to science and learning.

Every love to George was a new piece of scientific information or achievement. And everything that made up the basis of his existence was in the pursuit of knowledge and education, and I can definitely relate to that.

Relations: Ariza Delgado

George Washington Carver Once said, “Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom”. Carver was a man of success although he did face many challenges he strived to do what he loved and be the person he was and is known for today. There are several events that took place in the life of George Washington Carver that can be applied to my life today. There are also many things that he did not only for himself but also for our benefit. Whether it was money troubles, or encouragement George Washington Carver and I face some of the same problems in life that we have to go through.

For example, George Washington Carver had to get a financial loan to be able to attend college. I also, as well as many other students that I know today, had to apply for financial aid to be able to afford the costly expenses of attending higher education. Without the loan, I would not have been able to move forward and achieve my goal of being a college student and in the future doing what I love to do. The same was the case for Carver. If carver would have never gotten into college he wouldn't have been able to get a degree and study in an experiment station.

George Washington Carver is remembered for inventing over 300 different uses for the peanut. Some of these inventions include face creams and lotions, paints, medicines, gasoline, glue, paper, printer's ink, rubber, as well as laundry soap. If it weren't for some of his clever creations, I am not sure where our society would be today. Without ink for printer's the education system as well as many different corporations and businesses would have to find other ways of operation. Which would be possible, however, it would be difficult. If there was no

gasoline time would be looked at in a much different aspect considering it would take long amounts of time to get where we needed to go and so forth. Also, paper is used in several different ways. Without it, how would we have books and newspapers, or be able to hand write anything? Also without his famous peanut butter invention I would have never had it for breakfast and all the other meals I enjoy eating it with.

Another thing that I have in common with George Washington Carver is the fact that he had instructors that pushed and urged him to succeed and follow his dreams of creating. Throughout high school I also had teachers who inspired and motivated me to do what I love and to strive to be the best that I can be. I often saw myself almost giving up because everything was too “difficult” for me and I couldn’t handle so much at one time. If it were not for some of my teachers, it would have been a lot more difficult for me to believe in myself and push myself to start achieving my life goals and I wouldn’t be this far today trying to push myself even further in order to achieve success.

In conclusion, George Washington Carver and I have certain things in common that lead me to somewhat be able to relate to him. He has also showed me how far I can go if I just continue forward in my education. If it were not for his inventions, the world today would be a different place. Whether it would be different in a small way or a large way, without his creative mind, things would not be the way that we know them to be.

Relations: Reannen Brewer

George Washington Carver was a truly amazing man, he went through many conflicts but he still against every odd received an education. I can relate to George Washington Carver because he had to have help in paying for school, so did I, he was discriminated against, I am left handed, it’s not as serious but still applies, and lastly I like to create new things, there are many reason

why I can connect to this man, but I think these are the most relevant.

When I was in high school I was expecting and hoping that I would get a scholarship, with good grades and few absences I thought it was a winning deal. With every scholarship that I applied too, my hopes got a little bit higher that my school would be paid for and I wouldn't have to worry about how to pay for higher education. Then when graduation came and no responses from any of the scholarships, I became concerned, knowing that it would take me several months to even come up with the money for school, I was devastated, until a friend told me of financial aid. So I filled out the forms and submitted them. I really wanted to go to school in the fall, but was very unsure if I would be able to. When I was contacted, and told that I had been accepted for Financial Aid I was so relived, I knew then that I could continue my education. This must have been how George Washington Carver when he was able to get that loan to attend college. I am so excited that I have been able to continue my education.

The next relation that I can connect To George Washington Carvers life is that he was discriminated against, he tried to attend a college, he even got accepted and when he finally got to the doors he was rejected because of the color of his skin. I, all my life have been discriminated against, for not as rash of a reason, but for a reason that I cannot change, I am left handed. As weird as it sounds, and as strange as you might think it is, left handed people are the most secretly discriminated against because no one realizes that they are doing it. If you look in an average classroom you see desks, nothing special. But to a left handed person you see right handed desks, where the majority or perhaps the entire desk is on the right side. It is very hard to write when you have to contortion your body so that your hand can reach the paper. Also what few people realize is that when we write our hand smudges our writing because it retraces our sentences. I have actually been docked for having an unruly paper. It might not seem as big of

deal but in some ways it is because I did not choose to be left handed, I was born this way, and so was George Washington Carver who was born black. We did not let these traits of ours set us back, we endured and dealt with it. George Washington Carver went to school against all odds, and proved to be successful, and I have adapted and conformed, in hopes of graduating to a master's degree.

I like to push boundaries and experiment with my art, food and other objects, because I think I can discover new things, and create better things. George Washington Carver was an amazing individual in this prospect; he invented peanut butter, and saved the peanut industry. He had a very creative mind, he saw things in a different light, and he challenged that. I am as you would say, a free thinker, when I see something; I don't see what everyone else sees I see what it could become. Like when I do my art and interpret a small item, I change it and contort it to how I see it, which is more often than not, not how everyone else sees the object. George Washington Carver had the courage to think differently, and I hope that I can think differently too.

George Washington Carver was an amazing man; he accomplished so many things, against what others in the same situation would have achieved. He had the primary goal of a higher education, and he achieved it, with all honors. He was discriminated against, pushed down and even rejected on many, many occasions. I want to look at him as my hero because of all that he achieved, he didn't just go to school, he went to school against all odds, and against everything that he was told or support to do. I want to be remembered for not what I did in school, but for having the courage to go to school and get a higher education.

Relation: Anthony Ferguson

I can relate to George Washington Carver in a few ways. When I was in elementary school, I became obsessed with movies and with writing, and I still am today! My teachers kept

encouraging me to pursue my dream career much like how Carver's adopted parents encouraged him to pursue his studies.

The second reason is one that really got to me. When I was back in high school, I got a call and the guy on the other end asked me if I'd be interested in joining the army. He asked me if I had any disabilities and I told him I have Asperser syndrome and guess what he said, "Oh well, you can't join if you have that." And he hung up. That reminded me of when Carver wasn't allowed to attend college because of his race.

The next reason is a really important one. Carver, as you know, found hundreds of different uses for peanuts and his most important discovery was peanut butter. If we didn't have peanut butter, what would jelly go with, what would go into Reese's peanut butter cups? Our society would crumble! We owe it all to Carver for discovering one of America's pastimes.

This reason is kind of a callback to that guy who called me back in high school. I went to high school with a kid who it turns out was racist against Mexicans and he wasn't scared to admit it! He told me himself, "The reason I'm racist against them is because I can't stand spicks." Being that I'm half Mexican, that really bugged me to hear him say that.

Conclusion

The thing that I think that we will all take from this is that George Washington Carver conquered all. He went from being a slave to gaining a masters degree, to becoming the first black botanist. These alone are a truly amazing feat. But he felt inspired to continue and saved the peanut industry from bankruptcy, becoming the first black representative of a U.S Industry. But in the end he had just one striving achievement, he got a higher education.

Few of us realize that gaining a higher education is such an achievement; it is a very rewarding task in the end. We are of the higher education generation; there is a huge push to get

your degree, even just your generals if you do not know what you want to go into. Whenever we feel that we cannot complete it, look to a man who against all odds did. I look up to this man because every factor in his life told him that he shouldn't have been able to go to college; he did not have enough money for it, he was discriminated because he was black, and he was a slave. Any one of these reasons should have made him give up hope, but he endured, he endured through every curveball that life through at him. He was given a challenge and he accepted it.

We have so many great resources available to us to get to college, there should not be one reason that we are unable to go, if we have no available funds, there are always financial aid, loans and scholarships. If we think we will be discriminated against because of race or religion, then you are wrong because, if you go to one class and look around, you will see so many ethnic diversities that you will not even be able to count it on your fingers. You want to be remembered, so be remembered for striving for excellence and gaining your higher education.

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