

A Lesson in Being A Producer From Booker T. Washington

"I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor." -Henry David Thoreau

In our last post we defined consumers and producers and made clear that the one choice to become a producer is the single most important factor in determining your prosperity.

Booker T. Washington was an extraordinary producer from whom we can learn many valuable lessons. He was born a slave in Virginia, was freed after the Civil War, then set out to become educated. He arrived at the Hampton Institute determined to gain admittance. This story is a perfect illustration of how a producer approaches life and its challenges.

In his autobiography he wrote, "I presented myself before the head teacher...After some hours had passed, the [she] said to me: 'The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it.' It occurred to me at once that here was my chance...I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and I dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth.

"Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room.

"When I was through, I reported to the head teacher...She went into the room and inspected...When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she quietly remarked, 'I guess you will do to enter this institution.'

"I was one of the happiest souls on earth. The sweeping of that room was my college examination, and never did any youth pass an examination for entrance into Harvard or Yale that gave him more genuine satisfaction. I have passed several examinations since then, but I have always felt that this was the best one I ever passed."

What challenges do you face in your life? Are you approaching them as a consumer, or as a producer? As a victim, or as a hero? "The difference between a warrior and an ordinary man is that a warrior sees everything as a challenge, while an ordinary man sees everything as either a blessing or a curse." • -Carlos Castaneda

Being a producer means finding ways to become empowered when you feel that your options are limited. It means finding a way to succeed when everyone around you sees nothing but defeat and discouragement. It means possessing and enduring and vibrant belief that everything will always work out as long as you are committed to creating as much value for others as possible.

Follow the example of Booker T. Washington in every aspect of your life. No matter what you're currently facing, approach it with a mindset of determination and a desire to serve others. An abundance of opportunity and wealth exists for those willing to persevere in spite of obstacles and criticism.