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THE AMAZING
CHANGE

A CAMPAIGN TO CARRY ON WILLIAM WILBERFORCE'S
VISION OF MERCY AND JUSTICE



Be The Change

Your Guide to Freeing Slaves and
Changing the World.

Zach Hunter

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Be the Change: Your Guide to Freeing Slaves and Changing the World

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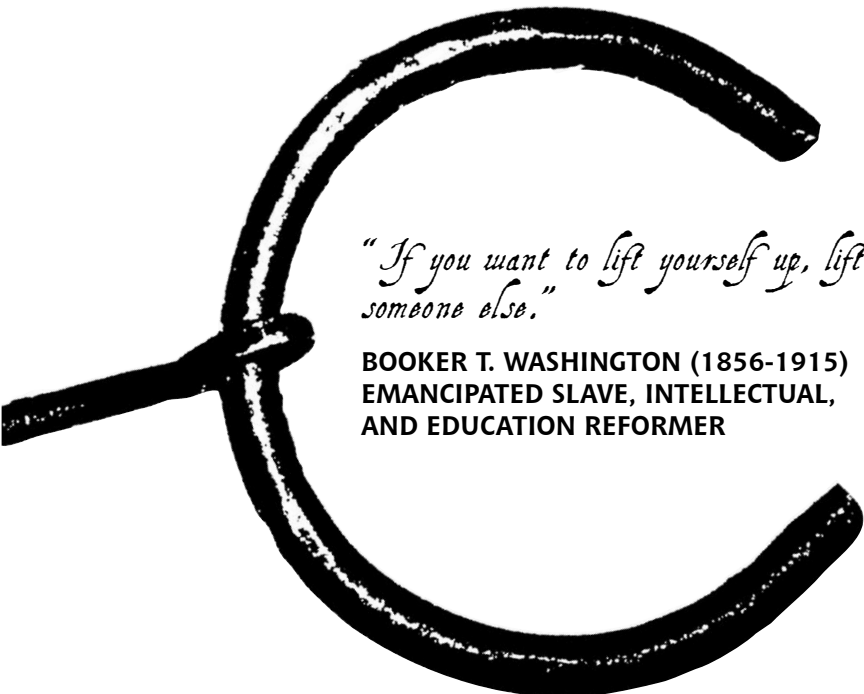
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INSPIRATION



*"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up
someone else."*

**BOOKER T. WASHINGTON (1856-1915)
EMANCIPATED SLAVE, INTELLECTUAL,
AND EDUCATION REFORMER**

DREAMING BIG

If you're like me, you want your life to count for something. When little boys and girls are asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" no one says "a loser." When kids are asked what they want to do with their lives, they never say, "I hope I'll live a few years and no one remembers me." Most kids dream of being superheroes, fighting villains, winning battles.

Well, I still have those big dreams. And I believe God likes it when his kids dream big. I just turned 15 years old, and I'm a modern-day abolitionist. Some of you might be hearing that word for the first time and going, "What the heck is an abolitionist?" An abolitionist is someone who's committed to ending slavery. Three years ago I started a campaign called Loose Change to Loosen Change to motivate students to get involved in freeing slaves.

Maybe you think slavery was eliminated a long time ago. That's what a lot of people think. Unfortunately, it's not true. That's right, slavery still goes on *today*.

I first heard about the plight of modern-day slaves about three years ago. I had been studying the history of slavery in the United States and learned about Harriet Tubman, a former slave who went on to help free many other slaves. I remember telling my mom, "Man, if I had lived back then, I would have fought for equal-

ity, and against slavery.” But then my mom told me slavery was still going on throughout the world in many ways, shapes, and forms. My mom was working for an organization that frees modern-day slaves around the world, and she was learning about many forms of slavery for the first time. I, too, realized slavery is not just some outdated thing you read about in your history books. When I found out slavery still occurs today, I was shocked. And I knew I had to do something about it.

Modern slavery takes many ugly forms. It can be anything from whole families getting into medical debt and having to work in a brickyard till they die; to little girls working in brothels; to kids being forced to roll cigarettes all day long. *In fact, there are actually more slaves in the world today than there were during the entire transatlantic slave trade!*

You may be wondering how people become slaves. Many think it all starts with a dramatic kidnapping, but that is rarely the case. Usually, it has to do with money, or lack of it. Sometimes a family allows a child to go with a trusted family friend who promises a good job to help meet the family’s needs. The child soon discovers this “friend” has sold them into slavery. Or, in some instances, a desperate parent will sell their child into slavery. Often the parents are misled to believe their child will have better living conditions and maybe an opportunity for a better education.

Instead, the child becomes a slave.

One story of a slave girl from today involves a child whose mother had died, and whose father remarried. Not only did her new mother not like her, but her father had a drinking problem. He sold his young daughter into slavery to get her out from under his new wife's feet and to help fund his addiction to alcohol. Like many other children, this elementary-aged girl was forced to spend her days rolling little cigarettes called "Beedi." These kids have to sit on the floor, rolling the cigarettes with their tiny fingers and poking the ends in with a sharp knife. Their fingers are cut and cracked from the work. Many times, they are beaten if they don't reach their quota of work. (By the way, some American teens think it's cool to smoke these cigarettes, but in doing so they are fueling the slave trade!)

When I heard about situations like this, I felt motivated to do something. So for the last few years, I've been doing what I can to end these oppressive practices. In the summer of 2006, I went on a speaking tour where I've had the chance to talk to hundreds of thousands of people about this issue. Some of my speaking has been connected with a new film called *Amazing Grace* that deals with the historic slave trade and how we can continue the work of abolition. In my efforts, I've mainly been targeting other teens and twenty-somethings—but I'm happy for anyone who wants to jump on board.

JUST THE FACTS

27 Million: Number of people in modern-day slavery across the world

Sources: United Nations, New York Times, Amnesty International, Christian Science Monitor, and Free The Slaves, among others.

PEOPLE WHO INSPIRE ME

People sometimes ask who or what inspires me. I usually answer by talking about some of the historic people I write about in this book, such as William Wilberforce and Mother Teresa. I've discovered there's a lot you can learn from these dead people—and we have the luxury of looking back and seeing the impact they made.

Some of the people who inspire me most today are people you've probably never heard of. (I've mentioned some of them on my thanks page—check them out!) I'm sure that's true for you, too. All of us know people in our lives who have made a profound impact on who we are and how we live. One of the people who most inspire me is my dad. Four years ago he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. We didn't know how serious it was for

a while; later my mom and dad were told he would probably die. Throughout that time, my dad was completely at peace. We went to several neurosurgeons, and they recommended we go to Duke University Medical Center. He got an MRI there, and they found out the tumor hadn't been growing, that it was basically dead tissue. This was fantastic news—but I think my dad's attitude would have been the same even if the news had been terrible. He had trusted God from the beginning. My dad is one of my favorite people, and one of the strongest people I know.

My mom also inspires me. She plays many roles, not only of soccer mom, but also runs a business, and works for several clients at a time. My mom stands with me in my work as an abolitionist. I probably will never know all she's done for me, but I'm grateful for her. I love her a lot. She is also one of my favorite people, and is extremely talented and caring.

I'm also inspired by the many other people working for justice today, such as a former slave named Given Kachepa, whom I met recently. You'll hear more about him in this book, too. You'll read a lot about the issue of slavery—because it's my personal passion. But you'll also read about other people and stories that inspire me. And, I hope, you'll likewise be inspired to change this world.

Before we dive into those stories, I want to say a little bit about my generation. What I love about my generation is how expressive we

are, and how much we care about the world when we are confronted with issues of suffering and oppression. I am inspired by the many other students I meet who want to show their love of God by loving people. Of course, I've heard people complaining about how my generation is selfish, and how little we listen, and how we are rebellious. But those problems aren't unique to our generation—I think we've had a lot of "good" examples to show us how to be this way. I think we need people to come along and be a better example for my generation. That is part of what I am trying to do through this book and through my campaign. My generation needs somebody to set the bar high for us, so we will have something to live up to, and even live beyond.

I'm excited about my generation. I think God just might use us to change the world—we have the passion and the energy. I want to encourage us to spend (or maybe better put, invest) our youth for Jesus. I'm up for it, are you? I believe by working side by side with God doing the things he loves—like seeking justice, loving mercy, helping those in need—we learn more about God and more about ourselves. I don't believe we have to do things for God to get closer to him and win his approval. But I do believe that if we love God, we will want to serve him and others. I also think it's pretty cool God wants us to join him in this effort when he really doesn't need our help to do anything! He's more than capable.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

You'll find that each chapter is organized around a theme or key word, and concludes with some questions for reflection and discussion. You may want to read this book alone and use these questions as a launching pad for journaling or a time of silence with God. Or you might want to get together with a few friends or discipleship group and explore the questions together.

There are also lots of suggestions for how to put into action what you're learning. Sometimes these are very personal points of action, and other times they are things you'd do with other people. The goal is for us all to work together to bring about an amazing change—first in ourselves, and then in the world.

I believe God calls us to live in ways that will make a difference and be an inspiration. Get inspired yourself. I hope this book will be a tool to help us journey together, realizing that God can use us all to *Be the Change!*

"Tell a man he is brave, and you help him become so."

THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881)
SCOTTISH HISTORIAN AND ESSAYIST