

Get an Education...

After the civil war had ended a very sickly young black child named George Washington Carver was living in Missouri. He was too weak to work in the fields so he helped in the kitchen of the home he lived at and learned to bake, cook, sew and iron clothes. He didn't have friends and found peace by tending to a hidden garden he kept in the woods. He was extremely observant and learned much about plants. People started bringing their "sick" houseplants to him and he was able to make them healthy again. They started calling him "the plant doctor". It made him feel important. He wanted to go to school to learn more but there were few opportunities at that time for black children to get an education. During that time most white people did not have an education beyond the fifth grade. George finally left his home in search of an education and did anything and everything to earn money to live and to buy books so he could go to school. He faced ridicule, racism and hatred but he persevered. He was past age 30 when he finally graduated from high school. He was in his forties when he graduated from college. He became a teacher at Tuskegee institute and a world-renowned scientist. Before he changed it, cotton was the main crop raised in the south. But raising cotton every year had depleted the soil. Abundant crops of peanuts and sweet potatoes could be raised in the soil of the south but there was no market for these at that time. He changed that. He learned how to divide peanuts into the different compounds that make them up and then make different products out of them. He literally invented hundreds of products from both peanuts and sweet potatoes. To prove the worth of the peanut as a viable crop he once appeared before a committee of U.S. Congressmen to seek funding for research. One congressman made an unkind comment about him because of his skin color but Dr. Carver ignored it and went on with his presentation. He served them a meal consisting of soup, salad, mock chicken, and an ice cream dessert. After they finished their meal he announced that the entire meal was made of nothing but peanuts. They were astonished. They also approved the

funding. Dr. Carver helped change the south because he changed agriculture, which was the main industry. Education and perseverance was the key to doing it.

Each of you has the opportunity to go on to college or a trade school. Some of you may come from families that are limited on financial resources or perhaps you are an individual who has had everything handed to you and you are not willing to work and sacrifice to achieve something. All of you can become highly educated if your will is strong enough. None of you will face what George Washington Carver faced in his quest for an education and he was able to overcome every barrier. Do yourselves a favor and get as much education as you can. Just don't ever get so educated that you look down on people who are not. Education without humility creates a snob. As we end our final night together I wish you all a peaceful night and a meaningful life. Never give up, remember the words to live by, do the right thing, live what you believe, remember how to treat people, finish the task, remember principle & honor in your life, be a blessing to others and get an education.