

American Minute with Bill Federer “Cast Down Your Bucket Where You Are” - Booker T. Washington's famous Racial Reconciliation Speech, & his warning against that era's Critical Race Theory

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Booker T. Washington addressed the racially mixed crowd at the **International Exposition in Atlanta, September 18, 1895:**



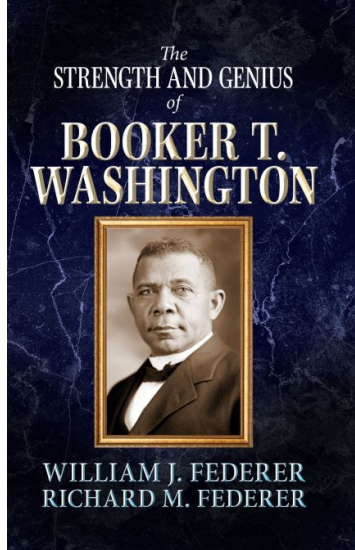
"A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel.

From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, **'Water, water; we die of thirst!'**

The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, **'Cast down your bucket where you are'" ... [continue reading American Minute here ...](#)**

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[The Strength and Genius of Booker T. Washington by William J. Federer; Richard M. Federer](#)



To understand the significance of **Booker T. Washington's story**, some background is helpful.

On **Columbus'** third of his four attempts to reach India and China, he sailed south along the **west coast of Africa** before heading **west across the Atlantic Ocean**.

His voyage was the first ever to experience and record the **"doldrums"** -- a dangerous condition near the equator where there is **intense heat** and **no wind**.

This region was later named **"horse latitudes"** by subsequent unfortunate **sailors** headed to the New World.

Stranded in the **"doldrums"** for weeks, sailors **baked in the hot sun** and **ran short of drinking water**, as the **salty ocean was undrinkable**.

To **save what little water** they had left, they reportedly **pushed overboard the horses** they were transporting.

In 1498, after **Columbus** drifted aimlessly for **eight days** in the **doldrums**, and **running out of drinking water**, he prayed and vowed that **if the winds returned**, he would name the first land he saw after the **Holy Trinity**.

The winds returned and on **JULY 31, 1498**, **Columbus** sighted **an island** off the **coast of Venezuela** which

coincidentally had **three peaks** rising from the bay.

He obtained fresh water for his sailors and in the process was the **first European to see South America**.

Columbus named the island **Trinidad** in honor of the **Holy Trinity**.

The **doldrums** were described by English poet **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** in his lyrical poem, "**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**," 1798.

A ship was lost in the ice of Antarctica, but was providentially led out of it by a larger sea-bird, **an albatross**.

Disregarding its help, **the captain shot the albatross**, and brought a curse upon them:

"With my cross-bow,
I shot the albatross."

Though they escaped the ice, the ship was later **stranded in the doldrums** near the **equator** as punishment for the captain killing the albatross:

"Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot – **Oh Christ!**
That ever this should be.
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs,
Upon the slimy sea."

The dying crew blamed the captain and **hung the dead albatross around his neck:**

"Ah! Well a-day! What evil looks
Had I from old and young!
**Instead of the cross, the albatross
About my neck was hung."**

When the captain finally **repented of his misdeed**, the **dead albatross fell from off his neck**, and the **wind supernaturally began to blow:**

"The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind."

When the captain spotted land, he thought he was seeing a dream:

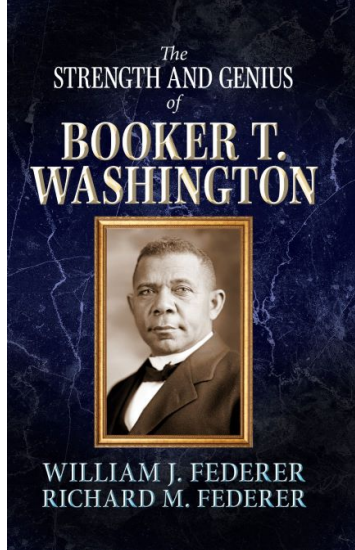
"Oh! Dream of joy! Is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? **Is this the kirk (church)?**
Is this mine own country?"

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And **I with sobs did pray—**
O let me be awake, **my God!**
Or let me sleep away."

After reaching land, the **captain** then spent the rest of his life wandering and **telling the story of his crime, repentance and salvation.**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge concluded his poem:

"He **prayeth best**, who **loveth best**
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."



The **doldrums** were referred to by **Booker T. Washington**, the President of Tuskegee Institute, in his famous address at the **International Exposition in Atlanta**, September 18, 1895, **attended by President Grover Cleveland**.

As recorded in *Up From Slavery* (1901), **Booker T. Washington** urged **racial reconciliation**:

"Atlanta was literally packed, at the time, **with people from all parts of the country**, and with representatives of foreign governments, as well as with military and civic organizations.

... The afternoon papers had forecasts of the next day's proceedings in flaring headlines.

All this tended to add to my burden. **I did not sleep much that night**.

... The next morning, before day, I went carefully over what I planned to say.

I also kneeled down and asked **God's blessing** upon my effort.

Right here, perhaps, I ought to add that **I make it a rule never to go before an audience**, on any occasion, **without asking the blessing of God upon what I want**

to say ..."

Washington continued:

"A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel.

From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, **'Water, water; we die of thirst!'**

The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, **'Cast down your bucket where you are.'**

... A second time the signal, **'Water, water; send us water!'** ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, **'Cast down your bucket where you are.'**

And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, **'Cast down your bucket where you are.'**

The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, **cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water** from the mouth of the **Amazon River."**

The **Amazon River** is considered the **longest river in the world**, stretching across 4,345 miles.

Where it enters the Atlantic Ocean, the **Amazon** is approximately **110 miles wide**, discharging **7 to 11 million cubic feet of fresh water per second**, which is 20 percent of the world's river water entering the ocean.

The **Amazon River** is so powerful that it pushes a **stream of drinkable water**, 100 miles wide, out **into the ocean for nearly 300 miles**.

This is where the ship was that **Washington** described in his speech.

Booker T. Washington continued his Atlanta address:

"To those of **my race** who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of **cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man**, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say:

'Cast down your bucket where you are' - cast it down in **making friends** in every manly way of the **people of all races** by whom we are surrounded ..."

He continued:

"To those of the **white race** who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits of the prosperity of the South, were I permitted **I would repeat what I say to my own race:**

'Cast down your bucket where you are.' Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested."

He concluded:

"Casting down your bucket among my people, helping and encouraging them as you are doing on these grounds, and, with education of head, hand and heart, you will find that they will **buy your surplus land, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories.**

While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by **the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen ...**

... As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past ... so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours,

interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall **make the interests of both races one.**

In all things that are purely social we can be as **separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand** in all things essential to **mutual progress ...**

In your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which **God has laid at the doors of the South**, you shall have at all times the patient, sympathetic **help of my race ...**

Yet far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that **let us pray God will come, in a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities ...**

This coupled with **our material prosperity**, will bring into our beloved South **a new heaven and a new earth."**

Booker T. Washington warned not to follow those pushing **that era's version of the critical race theory** (*My Larger Education-Being Chapters from My Experience* (1911, ch. V: The Intellectuals and the Boston Mob, p. 118):

"There is another class of colored people who make a **business of keeping the troubles, the wrongs, and the hardships of the Negro race before the public.**

Having learned that they are able to **make a living out of their troubles**, they have grown into the settled habit of **advertising their wrongs** -- partly because they want sympathy and **partly because it pays.**

... Some of these people do not want the Negro to **lose his grievances**, because **they do not want to lose their jobs ...**

There is a certain class of **race-problem solvers** who **do not want the patient to get well**, because as long as the disease holds out they have not only **an easy means of making a living**, but also an easy medium through which to make themselves prominent before the public."

Washington also wrote:

"The man is unwise who does not **cultivate** in every manly way the **friendship and goodwill** of his next-door neighbor, **whether he be black or white.**"

"One man cannot hold another man down in the ditch without remaining down in the ditch with him.

"To hold a man down, you have to stay down with him."

"I will permit no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him."

Booker T. Washington wrote in his daily resolves:

"To keep in mind that no one ever makes a sacrifice who does every day the simple, plain duty of **lifting up the unfortunate.**"

"To keep in mind that **service to our fellows** will always be our **greatest protection**, and will bring our **greatest happiness.**"

"Remember that the only way to show ourselves superior to others is to **excel them in kindlier impulses** and **more generous deeds.**"

"To realize that the surest way to lift up ourselves, **is to lift up someone else ...**

The harder the work required on account of the ... **unpopularity of the individual** to be helped, **the greater will be the strength and happiness gained.**"

Washington added:

"You may fill your **heads with knowledge**, or **skillfully train your hands**, but unless it is built upon **high, upright character**, upon a true heart, it will amount to nothing."

"**Character**, not circumstances, makes the man."

"**Opportunities never come a second time**, nor do they wait for our leisure."

"Great men **cultivate love** ... Only little men cherish a **spirit of hatred**."

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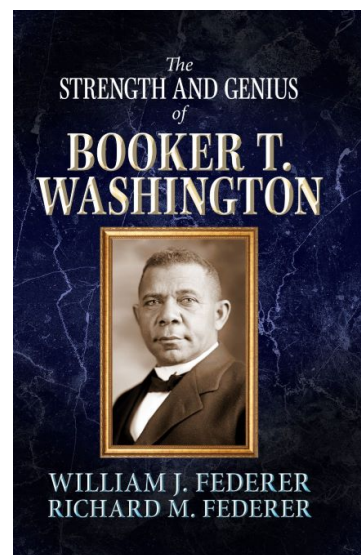
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