

# Making a Difference

Everyone wants to make a big difference in the world, but as Marian Edelman said, "We must not...ignore the daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences." When faced with the option to make either a small difference in the world at large or a big difference in one person's life, I would choose the latter. Though many jump at the chance to affect the entire world, they forget that if the impact lacks gravity, it will not last. Making a big difference in one person's life, however, ensures lasting change not only in that one person, but in all who encounter that person—in some cases, the world. The lives of George Washington Carver, Helen Keller, and Michelangelo Buonarroti support this point.

One supporting point for my decision lies in the life of George Washington Carver. George was born into slavery in Missouri, 1864. After the Civil War ended and all slaves went free, George overcame poverty and racism to become a brilliant scientist, dedicating his expertise to helping black farmers escape poverty. His ingenious experimentation with peanuts and other plants helped rescue the failing Southern economy. This change from slave to scientist came at age eleven. George left the farm where he lived and traveled to the town of Neosho, where he hoped to educate himself. But with nowhere to stay, he faced starvation, sickness, and the elements. Thankfully, kindhearted Mariah and Andy Watkins noticed his predicament, and allowed him to stay with them. Had they not taken him in during his first studies, George would never have made such an impact on the world. By making a big difference in George's life, the Watkinses also made a large difference in the world.

Another instance involves Helen Keller. Born 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama, Helen lost her vision and hearing as an infant. Life in silent darkness caused her such great frustration that she kicked and screamed until exhausted. But later on she went to college, wrote ten books, traveled to 39 countries, met 12 U.S. presidents, and received dozens of awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom. This alteration from a frenetic child to an outstanding woman came when Helen was seven, through her tutor, Anne Sullivan. Anne taught Helen the manual alphabet and helped her understand the words' meanings. Her patience and perseverance through Helen's frustrations made a huge impact on Helen's life. Had Anne not attempted to teach her, Helen would never have made such an impact on the world. By making a big difference in Helen's life, Anne Sullivan also made a difference in the world at large.

A third example concerns Michelangelo Buonarroti, born 1475 in Caprese, Tuscany. His father, a Florentine official, hoped that Michelangelo would become a successful merchant or businessman, preserving the Buonarroti name. Michelangelo, however, became one of the Renaissance's most talented artists. A noted painter and sculptor, he is recognized worldwide for his many works. This change from potential merchant to prospering artist happened during his studies. Michelangelo, who had always been partial to art, became friends with another student, Francesco Granacci. Francesco served as apprentice to the painter Domenico Ghirlandaio, and he encouraged Michelangelo to pursue his artistic interests. With Francesco's help, Michelangelo began an apprenticeship under Ghirlandaio. Francesco's encouragement made an enormous

difference in Michelangelo's life. Had Francesco not encouraged Michelangelo to pursue an artistic future, he would have become a simple merchant. By making a big difference in Michelangelo's life, Francesco also made a difference in the world at large.

Clearly, by making a big difference in one person's life, one may also unintentionally make a difference in the world at large. This fact, supported by the lives of George Washington Carver, Helen Keller, and Michelangelo Buonarroti, leads me to the decision that I would rather make a big difference in one person's life than a small, short-lived difference in the world. Marian Edelman spoke the truth; the big differences we make in peoples' lives add up over time to create long-lasting differences in the world, often unforeseen. Who knows—the people I affect may go on to make lasting differences in the world at large.