

Booker T. Washington was a man leading a dual life. He had one life that he presented to his audience in which he advocated racial harmony. The other life was the one that his friends knew in which he advocated racial equality. In his 1901 book *Up From Slavery*, Washington advocates racial harmony by assimilation, by becoming indispensable, and by rising above preconceived notions.

Washington advocates assimilation because he feels it would ease the transition to racial equality for whites. Washington states that “no white American ever thinks that any other race is wholly civilized until he wears the white man’s clothes, eats the white man’s food . . .” (47) and so on. Every student that came to Tuskegee was required to practice hygiene, have a tooth brush and to participate in manual labor. These lessons would lead to blacks learning to respect themselves and the work that they produced. It would also teach whites that blacks were different only in skin color and were valuable to the South.

Also, Washington feels that if blacks became an indispensable part of society it would ease race relations. To get into Hampton, Washington thoroughly swept the “recitation-room” (25) to secure an education. This act soon became his philosophy and taught all the students at Tuskegee to follow his that example. He believes that if blacks made themselves indispensable, whites would some day accept blacks as an integral part of society.

Finally, Washington believes that everyone was a victim of the society he or she lived in and to be a better person it was necessary to rise above preconceived notions. Assimilating into the white man’s culture and becoming indispensable blacks would slowly teach whites that they could be productive members of society. Washington advocates putting the right to vote aside because it strained race relations. He urges blacks to work on changing the mind of the whites gradually instead of instantaneously as the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments attempted.