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The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: The Labors of Youth

*“Make us proud!”*

No matter which part of the world you live in, a parent’s dream to see their child grow to have a brighter future ahead of them remains constant. They attach all of their best hopes and dream with their children, especially if they are making an effort to give them a better life than they lived themselves. They want nothing in life but to make sure that their children achieve such heights in life, in every aspect of life, that they cannot help but feel proud of their accomplishments. However, sometimes, things can take a turn for the worse, which leaves parents and other units feeling helpless and miserable with regard to the unwanted change at hand. When Malawi was hit by one of the worse famines in history in the early 2000s, the lack of help from government devastated the people. It ended up with more half of the population starving, with many succumbing to their deaths. At a time like this, while parental figures and other figures of authority in society choose to stick to the orthodox methods and other similar means to remedy the situation. But that is what can be seen as the beauty of youth. The youth can not only engage with a problem in a creative and innovative manner, but their profound spirit is more than enough to simply find a way to bring change, the sort of change that is needed to remedy the situation despite its unorthodox roots.

*“The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind”* by William Kamkwamba is the story of a young schoolboy from Malawi (Kamkwamba and Mealer). He belongs to a family of farmers and is deeply interested in the mechanics involved in the construction of various household items, such as the radio. He took a deep interest in both science and technology and repaired old radios in his free time. He enjoyed tinkering with things and learning more about technology. Even when he was kicked out of school since his father could not pay for his education, he asked the science teacher at his school if he could attend his classes and use the library. He was adamant to learn more about his interest in engineering and did everything that is humanly possible to fulfill his curiosity. When Malawi was struck with the famine, Kamkwamba family did alright initially. They were farmers that had some stored grain at hand. However, when things worsened, they were robbed of their grain storage, which made the entire situation a whole lot worse than it was in the beginning. People were dying at a much faster rate than they could be helped by the government.

At this time, Kamkwamba tried to find a way to help his family and his community by repairing a water pump and generating the required amount of energy through a self-constructed turbine. The turbine-powered the water pump, which in turn was used by the Kamkwamba family to plow the land and successfully grow crops to feed their community (Kamkwamba). Kamkwamba proved that if a community could come together and used a little bit of innovation and forward-thinking, they could solve most of their problems in a heartbeat. The thing about William Kamkwamba that stands out the most is that the schoolboy came from a background that was seeped in poverty. He had nothing to his name but his wits and his knowledge of mechanics and engineering. He had to drop out of school, and help his father with the farming, especially considering that no crops grew. All he had was hope that things would get better with time. And eventually, they did. He used electricity to power hope and make things better for the people he shared his home with (Karimi).

To think of the fact that William Kamkwamba was just 14 years old when he was forced to drop out of school and do what he did was remarkable, to say the least. The famine lasted for seven years and these years would have been more devastating for them than they were at present. It seems as if every remarkable person out there was able to do what was needed to be done in the face of adversity alone (Vidal). It was only when push comes to shove, people like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Emmeline Parkhurst, and Solomon Northup rose up from the ashes and shone like a star that changed the course of nature and making things easier on most segments of society (Butterworth).

The young generation is changing the world right before the eyes of the adult that raised them. It is becoming more diverse, with the present generation becoming more tolerant of the differences between their peers and themselves. The line of segregation drawn by the previous generation is dissolving, with people seeking innovative, creative, and long-lasting solutions to problems like pollution, global warming, plastic waste, war and everything else. They know what it is like to live on a planet where many animal and plant species would disappear in their own lifetime. One cannot blame the previous generation for their ways since they did not know any better. However, the older generation mostly has a hard time understanding the fact that the younger generation does not live the same life by the same rules that the older generations did.

They have their own set of problems, most of which are tailored to their wants, needs and their unique lifestyles. The older generation might have had an issue with finding the right source of employment or reach a certain set of milestones by the time they turn 25, the baby boomer generation were married with children by the time they turned 25. However, by the time generation X turned 25, they are either starting or running their own business, getting a master’s degree, or traveling the world to discover themselves. They are trying to look at things from a different perspective, living a life constantly on the go, all in an effort to make sure that the people they surround themselves with are worthy of their time and attention.

William Kamkwamba represents the very best of what our generation has to offer. The people of this era are fond of being the way they are. They are tech-savvy, can juggle work and go to school at the very same time. They have redesigned the traditional roles that society prescribed for them and rose above their station in an effort to change this world for the better and become better versions of themselves. Despite being considered lazy and lacking in values held by the previous generations, the youth today have proven themselves to be worthy of being the heralds of change and have proven, time and again, that they are more productive when compared to previous generations. Sure, there are things that can distract us, but these are also the things that make it possible for us to read between the lines and look beyond the scope of what the world is at present and what it can potentially be. It is their conscious effort to bring positive change that we have a chance for a prosperous future at all.

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