

CHANGE THE REEL

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ALL GROWTH DEPENDS UPON
ACTIVITY.
(CALVIN COOLIDGE)

Chapter 1

JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE MOVIES?

When “Inside Man¹” came out, my husband and I went to the movies to see it. We sat down in the worn, velvety seats and snacked on our freshly popped, buttery popcorn. As the lights dimmed, we silenced our cell phones and reclined with a sense of expectancy. The previews came on and for ten minutes we saw all the newly produced children’s movies. “Humph! That’s different,” I thought. “Cartoon previews for an R-rated film?” I allowed the thought to pass after whispering my observation to David. Once the previews ended, the feature presentation began... “Ice Age II².”

Half of the people in the audience leaped to their feet, left the room, and headed straight to the customer service desk to alert the manager of the error. Granted, this was

¹ Inside Man. Dir. Spike Lee, Universal, 2006.

² Ice Age II. Dir. Carlos Saldanha, 20th Century Fox, 2006.

only matinee fare, but we wanted to see the movie we paid for. When the four of us returned (you have to love the limited attendance of the Saturday matinee), they replayed the previews. This time, they were more appropriate for the movie we came to see.

This may have seemed like just another day at the movies, but the implications were profound because the way we approach a movie can tell us a lot about the way we should approach life.

Lesson 1: Set Clear Expectations

We went to the movie with a clear expectation – to see “Inside Man.” As you enter each new phase of *your life*, you should consider what you want to gain from it. Before I entered the college phase of my life, I had a very clear goal. I wanted to earn my Ph.D. in chemical engineering from an accredited university on a full scholarship. When I got married, I decided that we would travel all over the world together before our family expanded from two to six. And when I

started working, I was determined to lend my services to the highest salary at the time. As I entered each new phase of my life, I set a very clear expectation of what I wanted to take away from it.

Sometimes you make plans to see a particular movie (in other words, you've set clear expectations), but when you reach the box office, you find out that the movie you want to see is already sold out (in essence, your expectations can not be met in the manner that you'd intended). In this case, you have several options:

➤ **Option #1: Choose a different movie.**

At times, I've had to opt for something different. Despite my clear intention to enroll in college and earn a Ph.D. in chemical engineering, when it was time to enroll, I had to make some adjustments. One of the schools offered a partial scholarship in chemical engineering. The other offered a full scholarship in chemistry. Neither option was exactly what I wanted, but since debt was not in my plan for life after college, I took the full scholarship.

➤ **Option #2: Return home.**

Sometimes the available options are so far from what you want that it is best not to compromise. When I got married, I knew that I wanted to travel around the world. Unfortunately, I soon learned that my husband and I didn't have enough money to travel out of pocket. And, regrettably, neither of us had enough work experience on our jobs for our employers to send us abroad. Thus, instead of spending money we didn't have or trying to force a job relocation that wasn't going to happen, we remained in the homeland. This was the best choice given our alternatives at the time.

➤ **Option #3: Leave the theater and go to another one.**

There may be times when it is in your best interest to leave a situation altogether, although this should be your last resort. As for my first real job, I learned a very valuable, but hard, lesson. All the money, bonuses, and perks in the world can't compensate for job satisfaction. If the shoe doesn't fit, you can not force it! After almost three years with a company that paid *very* well, I hired on with a

different company that was better suited for me and it made all the difference. Leaving was not my first choice; in fact it was a choice that was ultimately made for me because I didn't have the heart to let it go. In my case, it worked out well. My only regret is that I didn't have the courage to initiate it myself. The theater manager threw me out!

Life circumstances have a way of reshaping your priorities and your perspectives. This is to be expected. However, going in, you should have an idea of what you want to acquire from it. Even at the theater, you have to pick a movie before you are given permission to enter. Why should your life be any different?

Lesson 2: Pay the Cost

We willingly paid the cost to achieve our goal – to see “Inside Man.” In addition to the cost of admission, we also took out a second mortgage for food and drinks to make the experience more enjoyable. What are you

willing to *give* in order to *obtain* the things you want?

For years, I wanted a lasting, loving relationship with my husband, but wasn't willing to compromise on much of anything. I was right, and that was the end of it. There was very little interest on my part in any of his ideas. I did not want his input. To be honest, I don't think I wanted much of anything from him, including his income, because I made enough money on my own. I was impossible to please and even harder to live with. Content to give little to nothing, I had every expectation that somehow I would receive the kind of relationship I wanted. How absurd!

Every day, the human race perpetuates this kind of absurdity at every level. I'd be willing to bet that there is someone out there who wants to feel healthier, but continues to do all the things that work against that goal. Some people somewhere may want a better relationship with their children, but aren't willing to invest the time it takes to encourage and nurture them *where they are*. There are even those who know that they have the potential to be confident and secure, but they continue to entertain themselves with the

same toxic ideas that keep them in a depressed mental state. When does it stop?

It would be awfully nice if we could watch the movie then decide whether or not we want to pay for it, but the box office would be bankrupt if it operated that way. And so would your life. The price you pay, whether in time, money, or tears, will only add to the pleasure of your future experiences. Take it from me, the best things in life only seem free; they still cost you something. Pay for your movie ticket! Don't sell yourself short.

Lesson 3: Beware of Detours

We were aware of indications along the way that signaled a detour from our expected destination – to see “Inside Man.” We noticed that the type of previews we saw did not align very well with the movie we'd paid to see. But notice that we decided to ride it out before saying anything. The result: we lost twenty minutes of valuable time. We had to sit through two full sets of ten minute previews. This was only a marginal loss, right? What if

you waited twenty years to take action? Not so marginal.

I've worked with a lot of people who are within five years of retirement. As I talk to them, I sometimes hear exciting tales of things that they are looking forward to pursuing. For years they've been making preparations, little by little, as time allowed. Now they will finally have more time to devote to these pursuits. On the other hand, I have also come across people sharing stories of things that they've always wanted to do, but never had the time. Some even bemoan spending the last thirty or so years of their life in what they described as a "dead-end" career. At a time when they should have been looking forward to the next phase of their life, they are resentful because they convinced themselves to shelve their dreams for a more convenient time. Unfortunately, that time never comes.

Little distractions, like ringing cell phones and chatty audiences, can draw your attention away from your movie. Left unchecked, they can cause you to miss out on the most important scene of the movie! Likewise, it is the seemingly trivial things in life that can rob you of your dream or severely

delay it. Maybe you have a dream of going back to school to earn an additional certificate or degree, but the time you spend entertaining friends may be eating away at time you could be using to study. A career can easily become “the other man” (or woman) in your life if it consumes all of your time and all of your thoughts. Children can even become an excuse to avoid fulfilling your passion.

I know that after I had my second child, I cut out many activities so that I could spend more quality time with my children. It was a necessity. As my children grew older and required less of my undivided attention, I still used them as an excuse to avoid various opportunities to develop myself. I convinced myself that I had to be there despite the fact that my children have an amazingly involved Daddy. I made it too easy for myself to stop caring for me, and my children were the perfect alibi.

Beware of the detours. Slight diversions can add up over time. Even good things can create problems if they distract you from what you really want. Don't sit through the previews for twenty years. If your instincts tell you something is off track, investigate.

Then follow up with appropriate action. Trust your instincts. Learn from them.

Lesson 4: Make Necessary Adjustments

We told the attendant that the wrong movie was playing. In other words, we immediately took action to reroute the destination once we were certain that we were off course. Notice that we didn't just leave the theater because our initial goal, to watch "Inside Man", wasn't met (remember lesson 1, option 3?). We alerted the appropriate staff so that the problem could be solved.

Have you found yourself recoiling after heading in the wrong direction? I've had to regroup many times. It's normal! I have started several businesses over the years. In an effort to bring in more income, I got caught up in a few low-cost start-ups that promised quick riches with little effort. I wanted money. I wanted it fast and I wanted lots of it. I tried to sell environmentally safe products only to find that I didn't enjoy selling things. I tried to promote a dental and vision plan via the internet, but I didn't know how to drive

people to my website. My ultimate blunder (I'm almost too ashamed to admit it) was to turn my hobby of sewing baby accessories into a business. Because I placed more value on making money than enjoying what had been a relaxing, personal pleasure inspired by the birth of my first child, I lost my hobby and the business.

After the tough lesson from my first real job (the one where I went after the highest salary), I realized that money wasn't a good motivator for me. It wouldn't make me produce more. It didn't give me the determination to pursue anything to completion. And it certainly never added to my sense of satisfaction. That is not to say that I wanted to be destitute. It's just that I realized (maybe for the first time in my life) that my time meant more to me than to spend it pursuing money alone. My wealthy place included an abundance of joy, health, laughter, fulfilling relationships, strong family ties, and other things that my money could never be used to acquire. I would rather spend my time pursuing those things that are meaningful to me (e.g. developing people,

nurturing my family, maintaining my sanity) and allow the wealth to catch up.

If you find that your life has taken an uncharted detour, take action to reroute your destination. You may be in a habit that leads you to meet everyone's needs except your own. At some point, you have to stop being the back-seat driver of your life. Take the wheel!!!

In the next chapter, we will examine more closely the interplay of the elements of the movie experience. This is critical to the plot. Please remain seated.

About the Author

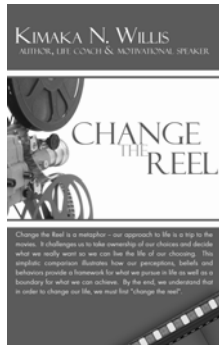
Kimaka N. Willis has been involved in the exploration, development, and production of natural resources for years. First, she helped people explore and recover their own hidden, and often overlooked, potential. Then she became a geologist for ExxonMobil, searching for oil and gas. Today, she is a senior petroleum geologist and an accomplished motivational speaker, helping individuals and groups find their own natural resources and use them to fire up their goals.

Kimaka earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Fort Valley State University in Georgia, and her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in Geology from the University of Oklahoma. She lives in Houston, Texas with her husband and two children.

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If you enjoyed *Change the Reel*, tell your family, friends, and co-workers about it. If you've learned something that has inspired you to grow, help someone else by sharing your personal experience with them. And if you found the magic potion (remember the introduction?), drop everything and contact me! Send your comments to info@refiningredefining.com or submit your remarks online at www.refiningredefining.com. I can't wait to hear your stories of growth as you change the reel. See you on the red carpet!

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