

Austin Che  
1/8/96  
Period 4  
Mrs. Spencer

Angelou Inter-Personal #2

Dear Vivian Baxter Jackson:

You are the perfect mother for Bailey and Marguerite. I think Marguerite feels more comfortable around you than when she is around Momma. You stand behind Marguerite no matter what she does. You help Marguerite get a job on the streetcars even though you knew the chances of her getting the job was slim.

Marguerite is much more like you than her grandmother. When she is with you, she doesn't feel like a caged bird. You help Marguerite soar to places where she would never have gone if she was in Arkansas with Momma or with her father.

I don't understand why Marguerite went to live with her grandmother in the first place. When you and Marguerite's father were divorced, why didn't you take custody of the children? You have proven that you can be a great mother. I'm sure that the children would have had a easier childhood if they had lived with their parents in a better environment. Why did you put Marguerite the pain of living in the segregated south where life was full of insult and where blacks could not fly, for fear of being shot?

Sincerely,

Austin Che

Dear Mrs. Annie Henderson:

I think you had a very difficult job in raising Marguerite and Bailey. However they grew up quite well without having either one of their parents around for most of the time. You sure have a lot of energy and determination to raise two grandchildren.

But, I really don't like how you give in to the whites. You carry a lot of power and prestige with the black community, but as soon as any white person is near, you become the servant. You let the powhitetrash girls mock you while Marguerite watched. You may think that it is better to let go of your pride and let the incident pass, but don't you think Marguerite might want a better life than that of a servant?

You are equal under the law, but if you don't act as an equal to the whites then the law is useless. You must know that blacks aren't inferior to whites. That dentist who you helped when he was in trouble should have been more grateful to you and have helped you. Why do you continue to be the slave of the whites when they give nothing in return? Freedom is possible if only you are willing to sing out.

Sincerely,

Austin Che

Dear Maya Angelou (Marguerite Johnson):

I really admire the courage you had in your life and in the retelling of your life in your book I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings. I would never have dreamed that what you went through as a child could all have happened to one person.

It seemed you went through misfortune after misfortune and yet you had the will to move on. Various incidents and descriptions of your childhood really surprised me and taught me things I would never have thought possible.

The segregation at that time didn't seem so real until I read your book. The total and complete separation between the two cultures is amazing. I never realized what it would feel like to be so isolated. And when the blacks did meet whites, the blacks weren't as equal as the law said they were. The actions of the powhitetrash kids really surprised me. It is pretty terrifying that these events actually happened within this century.

Your thoughts and reactions to the events that happened to you while you were a child, really helped me understand the way children react to certain situations. The confusion caused by the new experiences you had as a child was very realistic and believable. Having to live with separated parents, being unattractive, and growing up must have been an immense burden.

I agree with your decision to lie in court about Mr. Freeman and the silence that followed. Sometimes it is better to just leave things alone and isolate yourself. When it is time, you'll come out of isolation with a better understanding, as you obviously did since you wrote this book on your life.

Also, running away from your father after the fight with Dolores was also a method of isolating yourself from your problems. I think that time spent with Bootsie really helped you relieve you of everything on your mind until you were ready to handle reality.

I can really understand all these reasons which caused your isolation. However, I don't think you made a very wise choice when you took matters into your own hands to find out about lesbianism. In this case, you faced a problem too soon, before you were ready, and it caused you to get pregnant at age sixteen. If you had only stayed within your shell longer, then this problem would have become easier to deal with when you had to face it.

However, considering the conditions that you were faced with, it has been remarkable how high you have flown.

Sincerely,  
Austin Che