

Massachusetts Letters About Literature 2016

Massachusetts Center for the Book

www.massbook.org

Level III Honors Award

Dear Malala,

"I am Martin" and like you, I'm a teenager. In addition to the fact that we share the first letter of our first names, we also share the same dream to grow through learning to prepare for a promising future. My mother, who is coincidentally a teacher like your father, has taught me that the future success of a people lies in quality education.

I had always wanted to read your book, but I never had the opportunity to obtain it until two months ago when I moved from Venezuela to the United States. In the school library, fate presented me with your book and I did not miss the chance to read it. Your actions and message have unequivocally changed the lives of millions. I now include myself in this group of inspired individuals and hope to become part of the change that you have started.

As I mentioned above, I'm from Venezuela, where I had the joy of studying in a private Marist Catholic school called The Champagnat School. The level of education was extraordinary and my time there was enriched by my fellow classmates, many of whom I call my brothers and sisters. They, along with my dedicated teachers, provided me with a tremendous amount of support in a time of political and social turmoil.

At Champagnat, I participated in Model United Nations (MUN), which was the first time I heard about you and became inspired by your cause. The MUN taught me about human rights, the lack of basic needs faced by people around the world and the need to solve crises through dialogue: "fight for the dreamers' voices so that they may never be silenced" (this was our motto). On the other hand, our school founder, San Marcelino Champagnat, always said "To educate, one must love" ... then, our mission became to spread, through love, education so that the voices of those who dream will never be silenced.

I had to leave all of this behind because of the terrible situation that now exists in my country. In Venezuela, today, the future is a matter of luck. You don't know what will happen tomorrow or if you will be alive to see another day. The current government's inability to govern efficiently and democratically has been "a thorn in the side" of any Venezuelan who wants to follow his or her dreams. Personal insecurity with random kidnappings and killings, shortages of basic goods, and the decline of quality and freedom within universities are just some of the reasons for my moving to the United States. I had to leave friends, family, and, worst of all, my dad, who stayed behind working so that my mom, my sister and I could begin a journey in search of a future full of opportunities and dreams.

To be honest, on my first day at my new school, I was afraid... afraid to start from scratch. But, after reading your book, I realized that it is ok to feel fear, but it would be a big mistake to fear education. Today, thanks to you, I know that "The future is in a classroom" and that the pursuit of "Gulcada", place of flowers, does not primarily occur in the first garden you stand in. I am committed, more than ever, that I want to achieve my goals: to continue to grow as a person, go to a good college, and become a professional.

When you won the Nobel Peace Prize, you continued to inspire me and others, just as your dad did for you when he gave you the chance to learn. I have a role model in you and I will continue to use education to help myself and others as you are doing around the world. Hopefully, someday, I will earn the right to say "I AM MALALA".

Sincerely,

Martin

Martin
Brookline
Grade 11