

Sac Community Junior-Senior High School
Sac City, Iowa

Dear Lurlene McDaniel,

I have read many books, but not one of them has influenced me, or inspired me like Angel of Mercy. It was almost as if the book screamed, "This is what you're going to do!" Since reading this book I have wanted to travel to Africa and help the people there. I haven't decided if I want to go before college, wait until I've become a doctor, or both. The one thing I know for sure is that I'm going.

We are all given one life to live; one chance to make a difference, and that's what I plan to do. I plan to change lives, one at a time. This book made me think hard about some things. It made me realize just how privileged I am. To think so many people die from preventable causes like dehydration because their water makes them sick. If I become dehydrated it would just be a trip to the hospital.

In the book Heather was obviously wealthy and used to comforts, but when she saw how the people of Africa lived I think she began to feel guilty. In America, kids think it's a tragedy when they get grounded, but in Africa people are dying every minute, making them grounded for life. When comparing the ways of people in Africa to the ways here in America, it seems like two different worlds. I don't understand how the two places could have grown so different over time.

There are so many different things to get involved in to help people and I think it's sad that there are more ideas than people to fulfill them. I think it would be great if everyone would get involved with at least one project to help another person. Not everyone has the desire to travel across the world to help people, but I don't see how some people can't even try and touch a fellow person's life, even in the smallest way.

When I go to Africa I'm going to have two big problems. First, it will cause me great pain to see all the young children suffering. I am going to go into pediatrics and it's because I want to help kids. Children rely on their parents to help them, but in Africa it seems like the kids have to look out for themselves. With it being easier to get sick there it's going to be hard on me to see that. When a child is born it's said to be unconditional love at first sight. I feel that way about my sister. She's another big part of why I choose to travel to Africa. I think that's how I could feel about the kids there. I believe Heather may have felt that way too. Second, Ian keeps telling Heather to keep her enthusiastic dreams separate from reality because of how different they are. Even after reading this book I don't think I'll be prepared for what I will see. If it's not like I imagined I have to hope it won't discourage me.

After reading the book I think most people would assume that they know all about how going to Africa is going to be, but I don't agree with that. I think the book just created a picture in my mind, but once get there that picture may not exist anymore. Ian says going to Africa isn't about the medical supplies or doing good deeds, it's about changing lives. And the first life that changes is your own. I think no matter how much I prepare for the trip I will never expect to be affected in the ways that I will.

Heather talked about how she had planned on putting the trip away in her scrapbook and moving on with life, but then she changed her mind. What she saw was real and it was going to be in her heart and mind forever and I think that's exactly how it will be. I wonder how I will be when I come back; how I will think, feel, and what I will believe in. Almost everything about Heather changed and I wonder if that same thing will happen to me.

I believe that even by going to Africa Heather made a difference. It may not have been the way she thought she would, but she still did. I know now that I want to travel to Africa just like Heather and make a difference; one person at a time, beginning with myself.

Sincerely,

Jessica Schramm