

September 1, 2006

Dear Maya,

I hope that you are in good health and in good Spirits! You know that if you keep your Spirits high, the body will follow. It never fails.

Saturday or Sunday, I watched Bill Cosby and others discussing Education, and your name was mentioned. The program was on TV One—I hope you had a chance to watch. I thought Bill Cosby's earlier statements were a little harsh, but what was probably needed to stir necessary responses for true consideration of the problem. His view has somewhat softened, as he becomes more aware of the predicament that we as a people find ourselves, different than the situation we grew up in, that was more supportive than what exists now.

Did you know that, besides Julian Bond, you are the only one who even acknowledged receipt of my letters? Even your card came about a year later. Besides you two, it almost felt like I was just writing to myself. Thank you for acknowledging that you received the letters!

This letter will not be long, but I am including some of the writings that have concerned me recently. Some of the letters you may have already received—keeping up with who has what has been a challenge.

One last thing—did you know that I have never been to the Schomburg Museum? The last time I was in New York was 1971, and I didn't even know it existed at that time. I am so proud of your work at the Museum, thanks Sis!

Well, I hope you enjoy reading the correspondence, and I pray that Jesus watches over you.

Always keeping the Faith!,

Althais aka "Bootsie"

September 23, 2006

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa
200 North Spring Street, Room 333
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Villaraigosa:

Thank you for responding so quickly to my last letter, despite your very busy schedule. I am also sending some of the correspondence that I have sent to various people, in the hope of informing them of, at least, my perspective on various issues that affect us.

My goal is to put forth ideas that will advance the understanding of all the people of Los Angeles, and beyond our borders.

I admire the advances of Latinos in business and industry, derived especially from the thinking of the honored, Cesar Chavez. In a biography about Thurgood Marshall, I read about their collaboration, in the 1950's, I believe. Senor Chavez had such a humble quality about himself, a characteristic very appealing for a "grass-roots" leader, or any leader, for that matter.

Tomorrow, I understand, that you will be the speaker at the Watts Towers' Festival. It was at this museum, several years back, that I viewed a photographic exhibit of Black-Latinos in Mexico. We are, no doubt, more related than the photographs attest, which means that we need to advance our connection for the good of all.

Thank you again.

Sincerely yours,

Althais J. Aka
4261 ¼ Leimert Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90008

June 14, 2007

Re: Corey Deavers
4261 Leimert Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90008

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Althais J. Aka, the upstairs neighbor to Corey and his mother. I am writing this letter to attest to the good character of Corey Deavers.

Corey was (5) years old, when I rented my apartment in 1994. He seemed rather quiet at that time, but was more outgoing as time went by. He was a good student all the way through school. Corey was always well behaved and courteous. He loved to go to Audubon Middle School to practice basketball, after school and on weekends. Corey graduated from Crenshaw High School, just this year, 2007, and he has been offered several college basketball scholarships.

Corey is friendly, confident and well liked by his friends and we older members of the community.

The distractions and exposure to all sorts of activities, effecting all of us, but the young people, in particular, sometimes causes them to go astray or is a case of "being in the wrong place, at the wrong time." But because Corey has exhibited such strength of character, he should be given every good consideration. Corey is a young, intelligent man with a future, in sports and education.

I certify, under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Althais J. Aka
4261 1/4 Leimert Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90008

June 23, 2007

Mr. Bernard C. Parks, Jr.
Office of Councilman Bernard C. Parks
200 North Spring Street, Room 405
Los Angeles, CA 90012

You kind of caught me off guard when you called yesterday. But, I wanted to expand on our short discussion regarding Corey Deavers.

I, myself, stole something twice in my life. Once, when I was 5 years old, I "took" a little football coin purse that had a zipper. After I took it, I showed the purse to everybody in class, and I was perhaps more interested in the purse than the coins inside. The school called my Dad and he came to talk with me about the incident, along with the teacher.

Daddy told me to ask him if I needed money, but with him being a regional secretary in the NAACP, during the '40's and '50's, I was well aware that he did not make much money—we were always economizing and prioritizing the needs of the family. I never asked for any money.

In the early '80's, I lived in LA and was homeless, sleeping in my old Toyota. I had no shoes and when I walked around on the hot sidewalk, it would burn my feet. Where Maranatha Church is now, there used to be a Savons Drugs Store. One day, I went into the store and stole the cheapest pair of flip-flops that I could find (\$4.00). Security apprehended me as I was walking back to the car. They photographed me, and threatened to call the police. I begged them not to, and after about a half-hour, they let me pay the \$4.00 and let me go.

That taught me a real lesson and I never stole anything again. Now when I buy even anything as small an object as lipstick, I carry it, held in my hand at arm's level, to the cash register.

I have substitute taught at the Youth Authority in Sylmar. I am not certain of the overall program at YA, and whether enough is done to actually change attitudes and bad behavior; I was only there teaching math and English. If real counseling and concern can benefit the young men in YA, or at even County and State prisons, I would say, perhaps, Corey could benefit from the experience.

But the apprehension, alone, may have turned Corey around. I am not of this generation, so I'm not the expert on what effect it would have on him. But I would hope that some alternative counseling program where Corey can be mentored,

June 15, 2007

**Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa
200 North Spring Street, Room 303
Los Angeles, CA 90012**

Dear Mayor Villaraigosa,

I don't know what it is like in your neighborhood, but it is like a war zone in Leimert Park and South Central. There are helicopters flying over almost every night, and young men being stopped by the police. Whenever there are two or more, and sometimes just one, assembled or walking down the street, they are harassed by the officers. (Having lived in the Congo, almost the first thing I noticed was that young men walked around or stood under the street-lights at night, conversing with their friends—what our young men are being arrested for, at will, by the police, has its origins in our cultural roots). Not everyone out there is in drug related activities.

Even in the daytime, our young men are stopped, handcuffed and intimidated by the police. I know that some apprehensions are necessary, if foul play seems to be occurring, but it does not seem right that no Black young man in Los Angeles, practically speaking, can be safe from the constant fear of arrest, guilty or not. Generally, women are not targeted, but our young people grow up with fear and anxiety, male and female. It appears that teenagers and young people are committing crimes in all parts of the city, according to the TV news, but everything is being done to evoke fear, not only to the young, but everyone living in our community.

The tactic continues to keep Black males from ever advancing. They get a job, then their car is impounded for whatever reasons, they lose their jobs because they can't get there, their rent is not paid—eviction, and their families break up under the strain. (Of course, if community members kept their affairs in order, like we do, there may not be as many problems, but members are forced to decide, especially with limited income, what needs to be paid first, food or the DMV).

When I lived in Pasadena, some years ago, all of the Black public works workers were laid off, and replaced by Latinos. It caused friction between the two groups, with anger and "closer to the Establishment attitudes on the part of the Latinos." Some Black ex-workers that I met sitting in the parks, some with many skills, who wanted to work to provide for their families, but were emasculated in the eyes of themselves, their families, and society.

The May 1st incident was tremendously unfortunate, especially to a people who were just beginning to feel a part of the system, but I think it may have reminded Latinos that they are still under attack, too.

I have been home in the last couple of months; Kaiser says that I have breast cancer and I have been praying that they might be wrong, and or that Jesus will heal me, and trying, with limited resources to seek other counsel.

Included with this letter is my first letter to Senator Hillary Clinton. I want to encourage her bid for the Presidency. (Incidentally, I sent to her all of the typed letters that I have written—so please check with her when she receives the packet).

Be sure to keep your spirits high, because WE are going to win!

Always keeping the Faith
Through Christ Jesus

Althais J. Aka
4261 ¼ Leimert Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90008

August 3, 2007

Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa,
200 North Spring Street, Room 303
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Villaraigosa:

First, I would like to thank you. The helicopter noise has greatly subsided, since I last wrote to you about it. It is heartwarming to know that when you hear of such an irritating annoyance in the community, that you take action in such a positive manner. Please accept my genuine appreciation.

It really takes me several hours to amass my letters of several years. That is why I asked that you request the remainder of the letters from Senator Clinton. If, for some reason, it is not possible for you or your staff to request the letters from Senator Clinton, please let me know, and I will "helmet up," and retrieve the letters from my files. I meant no disrespect.

I think that there is an architectural proposal for new buildings (I think on Spring Street). Almost all of the buildings downtown are rectilinear structures. Would it be possible to redesign the buildings in an ovular form, vaulted glass roofs with arched arcades, and fountain instead of pool? It could be very modern, yet have more of an old world ambiance. (Rough sketch attached).

Well, Mayor Villaraigosa, I am still behind you 100%, as we all work towards a better Los Angeles. With God's direction, we will get the job done.

Sincerely yours,

Althais J. Aka
4261 ¼ Leimert Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90008