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c/o Daniel Pearl Magnet High School  
17000 Haynes Street  
Van Nuys, CA 91406

Dear Mr. Valentino:

My name is . I am a student currently attending Daniel Pearl Magnet High School. Just like your school this is the first year our school is open. I think that our school is great. The students and teachers are just marvelous. We have had some minor problems but everyone has learned to work together so that we can resolve our problems. This however involves patience, which many people do not have, but we are managing very nicely. Overall we are doing very well as a new school.

School is fun and great. It is providing me with the knowledge I will need to become successful in life. It will help me get a job that pays well to support the one thing that I enjoy more than school and this of course is my family and friends. My family supports me in all the activities that I do by providing me with the love I need to continue trying in my daily activities. At school I have many friends that help me have a fair amount of fun when I am not studying for something or practicing a sport. My best friend is a girl named . She helps me on homework, projects, and many other things, just the same as I help her. Although we work hard we do take breaks and will escape to an amusement park or the theaters to watch a movie.

I think the most shocking part of the book would be your trips to refugee camps especially the ones when you were little. To be honest I think seeing a boy get carried away in the jaws of a lion is just a horrific sight. I don't think I would have survived something like that. I know it must have been very painful for you however I am glad that you have survived and brought me this wonderful story. It has opened my eyes to the problems we are facing in different parts of the world, and for this I thank you and I hope to hear from you very soon.

Sincerely,

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Viskanta  
English, Period 1

January 25, 2010  
17125 Victory Blvd.  
Van Nuys CA 91406

Dear Mr. Valentino,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I currently attend Daniel Pearl Magnet High School. I am turning sixteen in March. In my English class we have been reading the book "What is the What." I really enjoyed reading that book, I learned a lot from it. I didn't really know anything about Sudan before but now I know a few things from reading it. When you were robbed I thought to myself if I would do the same thing, letting a stranger into my home. I'm sure I would've done the same, but we all learn from our mistakes so it's okay. You are an inspiration because when your friend died and you had to bury him you stayed strong. I don't think that I would've stayed strong I probably would've just broken down and not know what to do, but you stayed strong and buried him even though it meant you losing your spot with the group.

My school is very small. I like the size because then I don't have to worry about being late to any of my classes. The class sizes are pretty good too. There are about twenty to thirty students in each class. I have six classes a day for about an hour each. We start school at eight am and end at three fifteen pm. I play \_\_\_\_\_ I used to \_\_\_\_\_ . I got caught up in my school and couldn't play \_\_\_\_\_ , for the rest of the season. I miss it more than anything. I really enjoy going to school to learn new things and to spend time with my friends.

Ever since I stopped playing \_\_\_\_\_ at school I just go home. I usually do my homework or sleep. I spend a lot of my time with my grandma and my sister. Since my parents are divorced I live with my mom. My mom works a lot so I don't really see her, but when she is home I do try to spend a lot of my time with her. I see her a lot more than I see my dad. I see my dad every Sunday. Usually we go to church and then we spend time with the family and then go out to eat. My friends are mainly the people from the \_\_\_\_\_ team. I have some friends from \_\_\_\_\_ too because I was in \_\_\_\_\_ my freshman year. I love to hang out with my friends. After every game we go out to eat and it's really fun. I have a best friend her name is \_\_\_\_\_ . We've known each other since the second grade. She lives about an hour away so I don't really get to see her, but I know that were still going to be best friends no matter what. I love my family and my friends very much.

Sincerely,

25 January 2010

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Daniel Pearl Magnet High School  
17000 Haynes Street  
Van Nuys, CA

Dear Mr. Valentino:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_ and in the tenth grade. I play \_\_\_\_\_ for my school, and I have made many friends since I've started playing. We've developed a brotherhood with our \_\_\_\_\_ team and we feel like we are a family to each other. Since I started high school, I have made many new friends. As a ninth grader going into high school, I had many friends that went to other schools and I didn't know if I was going to make a lot of friends at this new school. Fortunately, it has been a smooth transition from middle school to high school, and I have more friends that I have ever had. I am an African-American teenage boy who likes basketball, music, and food. My mother and father have been married for almost twenty-five years. I hope one day I will have a marriage that can last that long. My mother, father, and my big sister, \_\_\_\_\_, have been the most important people in my life.

One moment in your book that was intense, in my opinion, was when the Ethiopians were attacking the members of the SPLA, and they started shooting at you. The Ethiopian soldiers were killing people all over the place, and it was a very sad scene to begin with. Fortunately, you and Dut were able to cross the river, and escape the violence that was going on all around you. That moment really symbolized all the trials and tribulations that you went through in Africa. It was a very deep moment in the book.

I go to Daniel Pearl Magnet High School. It is a brand new high school here in Southern California. We separated from Birmingham High School last year. I currently play \_\_\_\_\_ for Birmingham, because they allowed us magnet students to play sports there. My school is pretty good as far as academics go. The class sizes are smaller than most other schools in our district. It provides us with a good educational experience. I feel that the book, *What is the What?*, by Dave Eggers, really gives readers an experience about life in Africa, and a difficult transition moving to America. I feel that your experiences showed courage and perseverance that can inspire many readers in their situations. It put things in perspective for me about how good I have it in my life and that my situation is not that difficult. I thank you for sharing your experiences in the book with me and my class. That's all the time I have, so long.

Sincerely,

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25 January 2010

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c/o Daniel Pearl Magnet High School  
17000 Haynes Street  
Van Nuys, CA 91404

Dear Mr. Valentino:

Hi! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ sophomore at Daniel Pearl Magnet High School. I was born in Manila, Philippines and my family and I moved to California when I was about five years old. I am a very artistic person, or at least I like to think that I am. I love to sing and act. I've been singing in choirs since I was 5 and I have been performing on the stage since I was 10. Besides that I also love to figure skate. I started competing when I was 6 with my partner, and best friend, \_\_\_\_\_. I find myself blessed because of all the people that I have to love me dearly. I have two great best friends, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. They are the two people who I can go to for anything. Then I have my amazing family. I am the middle child, and although I think that there are many complaints that come with the title I am very lucky to have two siblings whom I care greatly about.

As I previously stated I attend Daniel Pearl Magnet. We are a very small school in Van Nuys, California. And like most schools we have a story behind us. We were actually a part of Birmingham High School, however most of the people in Birmingham made a decision to become a charter and many of the magnet teachers decided that it would be best to stay with our district. So now we have a very new but very close school. One of the best things about my school is the size. Although some thought that being a small school would be a problem I think it is the exact opposite. Being in a small school allows us students to get to know each other and the teachers and administrators. It's also nice to know that the teachers in our school truly and genuinely care about us.

In my English class we read *What Is the What*, and I want to tell you how much of an inspiration you are to me. Although I don't think that I would experience half the things that you did, I do think that your amazing journey is a lesson for everyone. You have been through so many horrible things in your life however you have just managed to not become a victim, which I think is very important. For me the most shocking part of the book was probably when you explained how your beloved girlfriend, Tabitha, died. Reading this part made me angry and very sympathetic. Sometimes I think people forget about this type of injustice in the world, and it's important to know that life is unfair however you need to find a way to get over it and go on with your life. I feel like that is a lesson that you have taught me and I thank you very much for it.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_

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24 January 2010  
1700 Haynes Street  
Van Nuys, CA 91406

Dear Valentino,

Hello my name is [redacted] and I attend Daniel Pearl Magnet High School. I have [redacted] older siblings, which makes me the youngest in the family. We are all attending school right now; one of my older brothers is in high school and the other two older siblings are in college. I play [redacted] and [redacted], as my sports in school and I got into that by being encouraged by my two older brothers. My family and I want different things in life. We are one of those crazy families but in the end we do come together and see what's important which is being a connected family. The only thing me and my family strive for is for an education, which we can relate to you in the book "What is the What" by Dave Eggers.

In the Book "What is the What" we can relate to you by coming to America searching for an opportunity to get an education, job and an overall experience in America. What was the most shocking event that happens in the book for me was how you dealt with the experiences in Sudan and America and you stand here today still alive getting your education and building new schools for the children. I mean it's amazing how you are willing to give back to your community and still strive for your education.

The School, Daniel Pearl Magnet, is a small learning community. We are known for our Journalism and Communications program. Our school was named Daniel Pearl because he was a famous reporter for the Wall Street Journal's, a newspaper company. He was a Journalist and he went to my school but later on he passes away so to Honor Daniel Pearl we named the school after him and there's a picture of him in the office. We have very small classes have great teachers supporting us. I'm glad I got a chance to read the book, "What is the What", by Dave Eggers, and I enjoyed reading it and I hope I can meet you face to face.

Sincerely, [redacted]

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C/o Daniel Pearl Magnet High School

17000 Haynes Street

January 24, 2010

17125 Victory Blvd.

Van Nuys CA 91406

Dear: Mr. Valintino

Mr. Valintino, to me your journey was amazing. It seemed very hard to overcome those obstacles. To me the hardest part was when you were robbed, because for myself I would not know how to react to that situation. I have never been robbed and I hope never to be, but if I was to get robbed it would be like someone stealing my life away.

I know how you feel in somewhat of a way, because I'm Armenian and sometimes people make fun of me because of my race and they also would say go back to your country or other terrible things like that. Actually when they say things like that it inspires me more to succeed and to become someone more powerful to show them that I can work hard and be someone. I know that I would have to pass many obstacles like you did but I will do my best to overcome them.

Looks like you have succeeded in life as well as overcoming those obstacles so if you can do it I can to. Like I said before it will be very hard, but I will try to do it. My dream is to become an corporate attorney, company lawyer. To become one there are really hard obstacles to pass but I will try my best to do them so.

| Thank you,

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12 January 2010  
17125 Victory Blvd  
Van Nuys, CA 19406

Dear Mr. Valentino:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am fifteen years old. I currently attend Daniel Pearl Magnet High school (DPMHS), this is my \_\_\_\_\_ year at this school. The things I like to do on my spare time are; play my bass and guitar, play sports like football, basketball, soccer, and spend time with my family and friends. The types of friends I have are the kind of people that are funny, outgoing, and fun to be around with. My family is kind of big but they are very funny and loud, they all like to hang out with the family.

The school I attend is Daniel Pearl Magnet High school. This school is very small and not that many students attend the school there is only about 300-315 students in the school. Our school is located next to Birmingham Community Charter High school we share the same campus. The school is alright the teacher here are good at teaching their subjects.

The part in your story that really inspired me is how you were able to overcome all your obstacles. You are committed to going to school and getting your education. Also when you get robbed you don't stop and say "no can't get an education anymore because my life is falling apart." No you kept on tiring and you persevered in life. Another part that inspired me was how you survive with all those dead bodies on top of you. What was going through your head at that point? One finally thing you are an inspiration to me and anyone who has ever heard about you or has read your story, you are truly a great inspiration to everyone across the world, that anything is possible.

Sincerely, ..

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Viskanta  
English, Period 1

January 25, 2010  
17125 Victory blvd.  
Van Nuys Ca. 91406

Dear Mr. Valentino,

I have read your book "What is the What". I feel I should tell you a little bit about my life after reading about yours. After reading some of the things in your book I was shocked. In some parts I was just completely surprised. For example when you spoke about the war. It was amazing and inspiring. You were very brave in Sudan and in America. Both when you got robbed and when you had to burry your friend in the middle of no where. You taught me to be braver in life because you have gone through way more than I have. I should be more brave because the things you went through were way tougher than the things I face every day life.

In the book you tell us about your friend Achor Achor. It reminds me of my friends and I and how close we are with each other. I have friends from many different schools. The friend I spend the most time with is . She always comes to my house after school and spends the night with me. She comes pretty much every single day. I have another friend that I am very close to. Her name is and she goes to . I have known her since we were in kinder garden. I think me and her are going to be best friends forever. I live with my mom dad two sisters and my brother. I am the oldest from my brother and sisters. I like being the oldest. I love my friends and family very much they are a big part in who I am today.

I am a sophomore at Daniel Pearl Magnet High School. I love the size of my school because then I'm never late to my classes. I also know a lot of people because it's a small school. I start school very early in the morning at eight am, but I have to wake up at six to get ready for school. I wish we started at nine am because then I wouldn't have to wake up so early in the morning. We end school at three fifteen pm. I enjoy attending this school. The student and the teachers are very friendly and they are very helpful if I need any help. My school is very fun and I love going there.

Sincerely,

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January 19, 2010

C/O Daniel Pearl Magnet High School

17000 Haynes Street

Van Nuys, Ca 91406

Dear Mr. Valentino;

I hope that all is well for you. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am \_\_\_\_\_ and I am attending Daniel Pearl Magnet H.S. I have a passion for boxing. Ever since I was young I could remember picking fights at school and with my brothers and sisters. This was when my parents decided to put me in boxing. Now I am an amateur fighter and box for USA Boxing. Since I've been in boxing I've won many medals such as golden gloves 4 times and going for a 5<sup>th</sup> this year.

The school I am attending, Daniel Pearl Magnet H.S, is very small at the moment. We were once a part of a much greater school, Birmingham High School. But since they became a Charter school, we separated from them and became our own school. In our school we have minimal things, such as; we have no gym and no lockers for the students. These two things that are essential for a high school were given back to us by our former school, Birmingham high school. We are located right next, if not right in Birmingham's campus. Although we are small what makes us so great, are our teachers. All the teachers here inspire you to do great things.

A section in the story that inspired me the most was your journey to Ethiopia. Every time I read about this in the book, I would think to myself, how someone can go through so much to achieve freedom. I mean watching your friend get eaten by a lion and the river that was coated in blood by former friends that had been killed. That's deep, I can't imagine what it would be like if I had to go through that. This is why the Lost Boys foundation is so praised. You guys have gone through so much, and give no hate towards people. This is why I wish you and your friend's good things and hope all is well. And I hope everything goes well with your school.

Sincerely,

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23 January 2010  
17000 Haynes Street  
Van Nuys, Ca 91406

I am \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old. I was born in \_\_\_\_\_, Armenia and lived there six years before I moved to the United States. It was very hard for me in the beginning to learn a foreign language. But now in the tenth grade, I am learning Spanish, my third language.

After reading your book "What is the What" I was overwhelmed by the kind of things you have been through. What really struck me in the book was the part where you and Achor Achor called the police because your house was broken into and robbed. I felt really bad because the police acted very indifferent and didn't really care. I have been through a similar situation and I know how bad you felt.

I recently found out that you are building your own school in Marial Bai and that is a great idea because you are helping the young ones get education and get somewhere in life. I would like to tell you a little bit about our schools here in Southern California. Our average high schools are usually filled with about 3000 students and we also have a big playground which contains a basketball/volleyball gym, soccer, baseball, and football field and some contain a pool which is used for water polo and more often for swim competitions. I hope you will be able to build a playground for your school so kids in your area would be able to participate in the same sports that we participate in. Even though our schools seem to be the best in the world, our cafeterias are not too good. I think you should make a good cafeteria and good food because in Marial Bai that will be a great thing to have. I hope to see you on television someday for helping kids in your area succeed.

Thank you,

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21 January 2010

Dear Mr. Valentino:

I'm a Armenian American named . I'm attending Daniel Pearl Journalism Magnet High School. It is my first year here and I already love it. My school is named after a famous journalist, Daniel Pearl. I live with my mom, dad, younger sister and brother. I see my grandparents and cousins at least once a week. My best friend is . we've been friends for years.

I have herd that you are opening up schools in your home country of Marial Bai; I think that that is a great idea. It will help the less fortunate kids get an education, and to have opportunities for them in the future. With the school the kids of Marial Bai will have a safe shelter, food, and friends to hang out with. It allows them to get the education the people in the war didn't have. I know what you and your people went through by leaving your home and family from the war and massacre, because my people the Armenians have experienced the same thing back in 1915 during the Armenian Genocide. We were taken from are homes and families; with more then 1.5 million Armenian killed by the Turks. That why I now how you feel and what you went through.

I have read your book and found it amazing. It was a great book and it had tons of great explanations and irony. The most shocking part in the book was when William K died. It was very ironic for him to die because when he saw the other dead boys lying under the tree he said it was pathetic for them to die because they were almost at Ethiopia. Then in the next couple of hours William K died. I'm very surprised how you lived to get to Ethiopia and then America, without the comfort of your best friend, the only person you knew. At the end of the book it was nice to now that you survived and made a wonderful life in America. You have lived a very tragic life and you deserve a peaceful life here in America.

Sincerely,

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