

Dear Sharon G. Flake,

Your book, *The Skin I'm In*, has really had an impact on my life. Before I went to the school I go to now, I went through racism like Maleeka did. Some of my classmates would call me a lot of horrible names. I had been rude to some people over there, too, which might have caused them to act like that. They made me feel like I didn't belong -- like I didn't deserve to have acceptance in any groups. I had some friends, but I feel everyone belongs no matter what. When I read your book, right there I thought Maleeka was me. You made me feel like you had been writing about what happened to me at my school and published it.

When I was reading this book it was making me think how it was my fault, too. Maleeka and I also need to lay off the attitude and back talk to teachers and others. When I finished the book, I knew Maleeka was kind of different than me in a way -- how she handles things. I always escalate things to where it doesn't need to go. Maleeka just ignores the people making fun of her which is what I feel I need to start doing. I always knew people would be racist, but not the way they were to Maleeka and I. I was really surprised with myself when I read this book. It is my favorite book and I have read it three more times. Each time I read the book, it opens a new meaning of the world to me from the first, second or third time I read it.

This book is meaningful to me because it showed me how it means to act and what makes people do things that you or I don't like. It showed me a little bit how to make my decisions better than I do now. I always acted a little spoiled and arrogant to my parents, family, and friends. If I were to write a book, I would go where you got your ideas and write the same book even without knowing your book existed. I'd have a different title, though, *Under My Skin With It All*. I would call it that because it's somewhat like your title, but it could possibly be the moral to your story and mine.

My life has really changed after this book. I know when I'm in trouble I'll think of this book and make good decisions -- to be honest and show the 'Skin I'm Really In'. You showed me what it means to have true friends and to show your true colors. This book is my guide through probably the rest of my life. Without it, I wouldn't have known another person that went through what I did. Now I do, thanks to you.

Sincerely,

*Saira Zapata*