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*A Memorable Dinner*

There are several people who I would love to go to dinner with, so choosing just two is a difficult task. However, two specific people stand out in my mind as incredibly influential to my life, as well as to the lives of others. These two remarkable women are **Mother Teresa of Calcutta** and **Rachel Joy Scott**. I don't feel worthy to sit at the same table as these two amazing women, but given the opportunity, my life would be forever changed. Rachel and Mother Teresa are two women who I greatly admire and respect.

Seventeen year old Rachel Joy Scott was the first victim of the fatal Columbine High School shooting that took place on April 20, 1999. I first learned of Rachel's story on October 11, 2007, when my school district sponsored an assembly that would forever change the way I looked at myself and at others. Rachel's friends and family members travel all over the country sharing the powerful and inspiring message of a young woman who wanted to continually learn, give, grow, accomplish, and do for others. I became entranced by her story and left the assembly with tears streaming down my face. Rachel is the kind of woman and leader I strive to be every day.

What I admired the most about Rachel was her compassion and acceptance of others. Rachel was never one to judge a book by its cover and always stood up for what she knew and felt to be right. One story I particularly enjoyed from the assembly involved a mentally disabled boy. He had no friends, was miserable with his life, and felt that no one cared if he even existed. One day, he was being bullied by another boy, who was significantly bigger and stronger than he was. Rachel noticed what was happening at a glance, came over, and squeezed her way in between the two boys. She looked the bully right in the eye and told him to leave the boy alone. Surprisingly enough, the bully did just that; he walked away without a word. Rachel and the mentally disabled boy were friends ever since all because of a courageous act of kindness. At dinner I would ask Rachel, *"How did you have the courage to stand up to the bully?"*

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In another situation, Rachel noticed a new girl sitting alone at lunch. So, what did Rachel do? She picked up her lunch, went over to the new girl, and introduced herself. Rachel's subtle actions spoke louder than words. She wasn't concerned with what other people thought of her choice, only that she was doing what was true to her heart. From that point on, Rachel had made herself another lifelong friend; again, all because she simply cared. Like all good leaders, Rachel set an example for others to follow.

After the assembly, the students were encouraged to sign a poster that was put on a table just outside the auditorium doors acknowledging that we had read and agreed to Rachel's Challenge, five basic rules Rachel had written before her death which she felt would make the world a better place. They were as follows: 1. Eliminate Prejudice by Looking for the Best in Others; 2. Dare to Dream—Set Goals—Keep a Journal; 3. Choose Your Influences—Input Determines Output; 4. Kind Words—Small Acts of Kindness= Huge Impact; 5. Start a Chain Reaction with Family and Friends. I didn't hesitate and immediately signed the poster, making a vow to myself that I would work relentlessly to follow Rachel's Challenge and inspire others to do the same.

I chose Rachel as one of my dinner guests because I believe that Rachel and I have a lot in common and that we would have been good friends. Rachel was just seventeen years old and was already preparing to change the world. I would love to meet her because she is someone I highly admire and respect. I would ask her, "*Are you happy with how your memory lives on? Is there something we can do on earth to better promote your cause?*" Speaking with Rachel would allow me to have a better grasp on her message and beliefs, so I could then continue to spread them and share them with the world.

Currently, we are trying to spread Rachel's message throughout our school district. It would be easy to forget Rachel's message, but I was determined to not let that happen. Soon after the assembly, a group of middle school students began meeting twice a month to come up with ideas to promote Rachel's beliefs. I thought this was a great idea, but nothing was being done about it in the high school. It was then that I decided

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to take action. I set up a meeting with our middle school principal, Mrs. Miller, to discuss ways we could successfully bring Rachel's Challenge into the high school. She invited me to join the middle school students, which I have done for the past three months, and then suggested I gather a group of interested students to approach our high school principal, Mr. Salinas. At this point, we are doing one random act of kindness each month. I sincerely believe that Rachel's message will bring positive changes for both our high school students and teachers.

My life has not been the same since meeting Rachel and I hope our school and our community will never be the same after being exposed to Rachel's Challenge. Personally, I am not so quick to judge people's actions and I find myself trying to find the best in myself and in others. I am trying to be a good friend and daughter; I am working hard to be a good role model for my younger brother and sister. Like Rachel, my main goal in life, although it sounds simplistic and idealistic, is to make the world a better place. I am confident that with faith, gratitude, and a caring and positive attitude all things are possible and I will start a chain reaction.

Mother Teresa is the other person I would invite to dinner, and the more I read about her, the more I consider her as one of my most influential role models. Mother Teresa never ceases to amaze me. At age eighteen she decided to devote her life to God and become a nun. She was my age when she decided to give her life to spreading God's love and message. Her life's mission was to care for the poor, sick, and dying. When she started a home for the dying, people said she was mad. But, Mother Teresa continued to care for the poor, and before long, the whole world knew who she was. She traveled to wherever she was needed, with no money or comfort, and owning only two white and blue saris that she wore, a bucket for washing, and a mat for sleeping. When questioned, Mother Teresa always responded, "I must do something."

What I greatly admire about Mother Teresa was her concern and compassion for children. In one instance, Mother Teresa told the government and church officials that she would cross the battle zone between

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Muslim West Beirut and Christian East Beirut, who were engaged in a grueling war, in order to rescue children stranded there. Many opposed her plan and tried to persuade her to rethink it. However, she stood her ground, saying, "This is our duty." Mother Teresa did cross that border and rescued the children. I would ask her *how she had the strength and determination to save the children*. While working in Calcutta, Mother Teresa started a school in Motijhil, a slum, under a tree. She had neither books nor any money, but she gave herself, energy and love to the children; she started by teaching them the alphabet. Mother Teresa's attitude towards children strikes me because I aspire to become an elementary education teacher. I love kids and working with them, so what she did inspires me.

In 1954, Mother Teresa performed yet another incredible and selfless act. She found a woman dying in a gutter and brought the woman to the hospital. The medical officials didn't want to admit her, but Mother Teresa insisted, staying at the hospital till they did. She then proceeded to visit Calcutta's public health authorities, asking them to provide the city's poor with a decent place to die. Soon after, city officials contacted her telling her of an unused building she could use as a shelter. Mother Teresa also set up a food program for the poor, as well as founding the Children's Home of the Immaculate Heart for infants, sick babies on life support, and for teenage girls whose parents had died or deserted them. *I would ask Mother Teresa how she didn't give up after facing so many hardships day in and day out*. Mother Teresa gave all that she had into giving and doing for others.

I would invite Mother Teresa to dinner because she was an amazing person who I would love to learn from first hand. She did so much for others and never once asked for gratification or acknowledgement for her actions. She is one of the greatest role models there is and I would like to be more like her in every way.

Mother Teresa has begun to impact my life because I am researching her for my senior paper. I always knew she was a highly renowned person but I never knew how amazing she truly was. I am striving to be like

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her more and more each day. I want to help those who are less fortunate and who are in need. I want to change the world and make it a better place for all. I hope to spread Mother Teresa's words to others.

There would never be enough time to spend with Mother Teresa and Rachel at dinner. From them I would hope to learn how I can spread their messages and continue their efforts to make the world a better place. Just being in their presence would allow me to see the kind of person I hope to be both personally and professionally. As I continue to grow, I hope that I can be more like Mother Teresa and Rachel.