

# Freedom Writers

MAR K

Would you like some more coffee?

ERIK

Yes. Thank you. I brought my lesson plans. I'd love it if you looked them over.

MAR K

Thank you... And these are the classes you'll start with. Freshman English. Four classes. About 150 students in all.

(BEAT) ERIK  
Probation Officer?

MAR K

Yes, some of them are just out of Juvenile Hall. One or two might be wearing ankle cuffs to monitor their whereabouts....

(BEAT)

And, yes see here, we'll have to revise your lesson plans. If you look at their scores, these vocabulary lists and some of these the books - "Homer's The Odyssey" - are going to be too difficult for them.

ERIK

All right.

MAR K

Also, for most of them to get here, it takes three buses and almost ninety minutes each way...

ERIK

My God.

MAR K

...so I wouldn't give them too much of a homework load. You'll just be wasting a lot of time following up on overdue work.

ERIK

All right... Thank you.

MAR

You're from Newport Beach?

ERIK

Yes.

MAR

I once drove past one of those exclusive, gated communities there. Beautiful. Do you live in one of those?

ERIK

Well, exclusive makes it sound fancier than it really is... I *grew up* in a gated community, but I don't live in one anymore. Where are you from?

MAR

Right here. Long Beach.

ERIK

Did you go to school here?

MAR

Oh no. I wasn't allowed. In those days, Wilson was much more...  
(BEAT)  
"Exclusive".

ERIK

Well, you finally made it.

MAR

(BEAT)

It's too bad you weren't here even two years ago. We always had one of the highest scholastic records in the district. But since voluntary integration was "suggested", we've lost over 75 percent of our...strongest students.

ERIK

Well, actually, I chose Wilson because of the integration program. I think what's happening here is really exciting. Don't you?  
(BEAT)

My father was involved in the Civil Rights Movement and when he'd tell me about the marches and the protests and... just knowing the effect they had, I'd always thought... Oh God, I have to do something like that.

MAR K

Your father was a civil rights activist living in a gated community?

ERIK

No. My parents divorced when I was little. I lived with my mother... But I remember when I was watching the LA Riots on TV, I was thinking of going to law school at the time and I thought, God, by the time you're defending a kid in a courtroom, the battle's already lost. The real fighting should happen here, in the classroom.

MAR K

Well, that's a very... well thought out... phrase. Sounds like something a politician would say. Of course, you know how useless they are in education.

ERIK

I'm sorry. I don't mean to sound like "let's make a difference!".

MAR K

But that is what you mean?

ERIK

Well... yes.

MARK  
ERIK I think you're a STRONG intelligent  
MAN ... but you're a first time teacher and  
as head of this department, I have to be  
confident that you're capable of dealing with  
what we face here—

ERIK  
I am. I am. I'm sorry for sounding like... this  
ridiculous cliché but I don't know how else to  
say it when that's just how I feel. I know I  
have a lot to learn as a teacher but I'm a  
really good student. I am. And... I really want  
to be here.

MARK  
THATS A NICE WATCH

ERIK  
Thank you. From my father.

MARK  
I wouldn't wear it to class.