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10<sup>th</sup> Grade

Ms. Aul

### “The African American I Most Admire”

The African-American individual I most admire is my aunt, Jana Craig. She was born in Los Angeles, California and raised by a single mother along with four other siblings. Even though life during her youth was sometimes a struggle, she withstood and portrays now the qualities of determination, strength and compassion for others.

During her childhood she says, “My family and I struggled somewhat financially.” My grandmother, her mother, was a widow and took care of four children. From this difficulty, as a little girl, my aunt developed a desire to explore a different type of lifestyle and was inquisitive about the world. Therefore, as a child, my aunt was determined, even though she felt reading was a pleasure, to do exceptionally well in school despite her circumstances. For her, being in a better financial state and helping her family was the most important goal. Eventually, my aunt received a full scholarship from the University of Santa Cruz.

However, while in college, my aunt’s home was in foreclosure and she had lost valuable items. She says, “I was going to decide to drop out and get a job.” Yet, my aunt continued college even though she was constantly uncertain of what she should have done. She continued college mainly because she knew that her mother would sincerely want her to. Unfortunately, her mother passed away during her years in graduate school and she ended up going back to school in spite of not having money. She had to sacrifice the things she wanted as well as the places she wanted to go. Nevertheless, she ended up going to professional graduate school to receive her doctorate in philosophy. She recalls, “There were times when I felt culturally alienated, isolated, and

homogenous.” There were barely any African-American people around. Yet, she overcame that obstacle and received her doctorate (in academia) in a field where there were predominantly men.

Today, Jana Craig is the director of the Ethical Department in Springfield, Illinois’s Medical Hospital. Even though she has a PhD and not a M.D. her job consists of interacting with medical doctors who have earned her respect and call to her for advice.

Along with strength and determination, my aunt also withholds empathy and compassion for others. She supports charities and is always available for family and friends. She says, “I don’t think I’m better than others just because of the life conditions they’re in. I see those people and think of how anyone, including myself, could be in that predicament.” She carries such a tremendous heart and benevolent spirit. In conclusion, my aunt is a strong, determined, compassionate woman who inspires and encourages me to do great things despite difficult circumstances.