

The Promise



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In the bestselling tradition of *The Pact* and *The Freedom Writers Diary* —the inspiring story of one woman’s extraordinary promise and steely determination to make a difference in the world.

One morning in 1987 Oral Lee Brown walked into a corner store in East Oakland, California, to buy snacks for work. A little girl asked her for a quarter, and Brown assumed that she wanted to buy candy, but surprisingly she bought bread and bologna—staples for her family.

Later that day Brown couldn’t get the little girl out of her mind. Why wasn’t she in school? Why was she out begging for money to buy food for her family? After several weeks of not being able to sleep, Brown went to look for the girl at the local elementary school and soon found herself in a first-grade classroom. She didn’t find the little girl, but before she left she found herself promising the kids that if they finished high school, she would pay for their college education.

At the time, Oral Lee Brown made only \$45,000 a year.

But years later, after annually saving and investing \$10,000 of her own money and establishing the Oral Lee Brown Foundation, this remarkable woman made good on her promise: after nineteen of the original twenty-three students graduated from high school, she sent them all to college. And in May of 2003, LaTosha Hunter was the first of Brown's "babies," as well as the first person in her family, to graduate from college.

This marvelous and inspiring book is the amazing story of one woman's unending desire to make a difference. And if once was not enough, in 2001 Brown made the same promise to three new classrooms of first-, fifth-, and ninth-graders. Brown and her foundation are now committed to adopting a new crop of kids to send to college every four years.

Brown's pledge to the students was not without great personal and public sacrifice. Her promise turned her life upside-down—it strained her relationships, and at times required her to work several different jobs. Brown also developed a strong emotional attachment to the children—for many of these students Brown was the one consistent adult in their lives.

In a world short on heroes, altruism, and dedication, THE PROMISE shows that it is still possible to change lives for the better. This book will encourage, uplift, and inspire every reader.

A portion of the proceeds from the book will go to the Oral Lee Brown Foundation. To learn more about the Oral Lee Brown Foundation please visit www.oralleebrownfoundation.com.

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