

January 10, 2019

Dear Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld,

I live in a part of a city in the south where there isn't as much racism as there probably is in other parts of the city. Because of that, I grew up thinking that races were now as one, everyone got along perfectly, and it was happy everywhere. I didn't even consider the fact that people could still be judging others by the color of their skin. Then, as I got older, I noticed certain things: all the Muslim people in my class were in a friend group together, almost two-thirds of my private-school class was white, and the one that surprised me the most: all of my close friends were white. That I've never even had a sleepover with someone that's not white. I began to realize that even though we all went to school and did things together, we weren't really *together* at all. We were separated. Divided, and we didn't even realize it. And as much as I'd like to tell everyone to just forget the color of another's skin, it's not that simple. As much as I'd like to fix it, I can't. Even with me understanding all of these things, it wasn't until I read *A Heart Divided* that the full realization hit me. That what I'm experiencing at my school is still everywhere, and often it's much worse.

When I first picked up *A Heart Divided*, I thought from the title that it was a romance novel of some sort. But, like they say, "never judge a book by its cover," so I decided to give it a try. As I read the book, I began to realize that it's not a romance novel, but it is a book about love. Love for one another, no matter the color of our skin. It was hard to put it down. I was intrigued from the first page. I wanted to know what happened to Kate; if she pursued her passion in writing when she moved to Redford or if she followed a new path. The saying on

Kate's favorite pillow, "THE PURPOSE OF LIFE IS A LIFE OF PURPOSE" was also greatly inspiring. I think it means that the meaning of life is to have a meaningful life where you do things that can change something for the better. I know that's what I want to do when I'm older, and I'll change the world. I'll try to stop people from judging others by the color of their skin and instead by their personality.

A Heart Divided has changed my life, and I now look at things in a whole new light. I now realize that the people in this world aren't perfect, and racism like it is in this book exists everywhere. I now know to always try to reach out to everyone, even if they're different than me. This book taught me to be aware of the world, but it also taught me that one significant event can change a whole town. When Kate's sister was shot, the whole town realized what all the fighting had done. It had almost killed an eleven-year-old. It wasn't Kate that changed Redford, it was her sister. Like she said, "I will look back at that monument and see it forever changed by the good *my sister* left behind. And I will be smiling through my tears" (Bennett and Gottesfeld 303). *A Heart Divided* was one of the most powerful books I have ever read. It taught me things that I didn't know before, and it helped me become more aware of the world around me. I'll remember this book as the book that helped me, that transformed me, that taught me something. I'll always remember the book that changed my life.

Sincerely,

Celia Poag, 7th Grade