

Shawn Gasseling

907 Laramie Alliance, Nebraska 69301

Dear Khaled Hosseini,

I started applying for college scholarships this Fall, and when I came across one that required an essay about bringing peace to the Middle East I had no idea what to write about. I asked my English teacher what she thought, and she recommended your book, A Thousand Splendid Suns. I began reading it, hoping for an answer to my essay, and instead I found a book that changed my whole view of the Middle East, its people, and the war currently taking place.

Before reading A Thousand Splendid Suns, I had a very close-minded view of the Middle East. From the very one-sided news coverage, I had the idea that all of the Middle East was a barren, desert-like wasteland. I assumed that it was all dust and sand with no beauty whatsoever. I thought everyone lived lives of anguish and desperation in run-down dilapidated houses and shacks. I didn't realize how hard life was for Afghans and other Middle Easterners, so I didn't think there was any good reason for Americans to be fighting in a war over seas. It seemed so pointless.

Now, after reading your book, I can't believe how ignorant I was to the culture of Middle Easterners and the hardships and travesties they have suffered. I couldn't believe when Jalil gave away Mariam, only fifteen-years-old, to marry some old man in a far off town. I didn't realize that arranged marriages were so common elsewhere in the world. I also didn't realize how many wars and battles Afghanistan has gone through and how its citizens suffered. When Laila's parents finally decided to leave Kabul, and Laila might have the chance to see Tariq again I was ecstatic that things were looking up for her. But then the reality of war struck with a bombardment of rockets and I realized for some people happy ending don't always happen. The

coming of the Taliban also provided a culture shock for me. I couldn't believe the heinous laws they tried to enforce. I couldn't even comprehend how Rasheed could abuse and beat his wives and how the law did nothing to stop it. It absolutely broke my heart when Mariam sacrificed herself for Laila and her family by turning herself in for the murder of Rasheed. It was these laws and injustices that changed my mind about the war in the Middle East. This heart-wrenching novel made me realize that any and everything must be done to get rid of the Taliban and their radical, unjust, sexist rule. As Americans, I believe we need to do the right thing help the people of the Middle East in any way we can and set up a fair, equal government.

And so I would like to thank you Mr. Hosseini for all you have done for me. Your novel has helped me write an essay for a very important scholarship, but most of all it changed my view on life and politics. Before reading your novel, I didn't think mistreatment like that existed in the world still today and now I want to help the suffering people of the Middle East.

Sincerely,

Shawn Gasseling

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shawn Gasseling". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.