

December 5, 2021

Dear Mr. Rather,

When I read your book, *What Unites Us*, your perspective on present day patriotism was enlightening. I agree that what is often overlooked is the simplicity of what makes our country a beacon to the world. Your book is an excellent reminder that it is the hardworking attitude of everyday citizens that has made this country what it is today.

Your description of the multiple facets of our common national community highlights the answer to the wandering question of “what unites us?” Although we all have different opinions and beliefs, it is our diversity that brings us together. Your book taught me that citizenship must be rooted in the minds of ALL people.

We are shielded from the real meaning of patriotism when we see government officials saying their vision of America represents the only real patriotism. This attitude sends a message to many people with strong ancestral ties to America that this nation is not for them. Thankfully, you have reminded Americans that separation is not the answer. Thank you for explaining that our nation will not survive as we know it without an engaged and committed population.

I appreciate your book for highlighting serious topics such as racism, power of the press, women's rights, gay marriage, and immigration. Even though they are often considered to be controversial topics, you let us know that this is what patriotism is about—the rights of every individual. Being different makes our country unique.

I have personally felt different in some situations because I frequently don't have the same opinion as others, but your book has given me a perspective to see this as a positive thing. Our diversity makes us who we are as a nation, and we would be unwise if we only saw patriotism as our love for this country and were unable to see improvements that need to be made.

Although I love myself and who I am, I know I am imperfect and that there are things I need to work on. It would be wonderful if we could apply this same logic to our country and ask how we can make our nation better. I have developed this perspective through my reading of your book because it helped me realize that it's important to acknowledge that our country is unfinished and can grow from the mistakes we have made.

Through my reading of your historical account of our country, I have learned things that are seldom spoken of in history classes. I used to think history wasn't as important as subjects such as math and English, but I now understand more about my country and have seen growth in my personal beliefs. Through a better understanding of history, I see the importance of improving our country.

It is obvious that our country will continue to have problems, but I see more clearly that we can learn from leaders mentioned in your book when we build upon solutions they developed to make our country strong. Your book helped me discover what unites us and how I can help unite

others through staying involved with my school and community and showing patriotism by getting others involved.

History helps us see that “not working together” prevents us from finding long-lasting solutions to problems. We must have the courage to identify what is wrong in society, but we must realize that it can't just be done by one person. Throughout my involvement at school, as freshmen class president, I have made it my duty to get as many people involved as possible. I often talk to students—council members as well as non-council members—about getting involved in planning and finding solutions.

I hope to be known as someone that welcomes everyone and includes people no matter who they are. My favorite quote from your book is “Our own history has shown that we are stronger as a mosaic than a melting pot.” I find myself asking “why should we try to assimilate people into being like everyone else, when we are in need of each other's differences?” I have learned that we gain so much more when we include people for what they have to offer and not make them into something they are not.

I am delighted that I had the opportunity to read your book because it has helped me realize the true definition of patriotism and to become more aware of the importance of including ALL students, regardless of differences, to get involved and improve our school and country for the greater good.

Sincerely,

*Cate Dennis*

Cate Dennis