

“Abby Takes a Stand”

As a small child I loved to learn about history through reading. In elementary school, our school librarian would often give us suggestions of interesting books to read. I enjoyed these suggestions, and read a wide variety of the books he recommended. However I was always most fascinated by books about events in history. One of these historical books that I was particularly intrigued by was *Abby Takes a Stand*, a book by Patricia C. McKissack, exploring the height of the civil rights movement through the eyes of a ten year old girl. I initially checked out the book thinking it would be an easy read, however I soon became engrossed in the captivating storyline and the deep messages throughout the book. Although the book itself may be small, it has had a large impact on my life and my view on racial inequality as a global issue.

First off, *Abby Takes a Stand* was an incredible eye opener for me. The book described the treatment many blacks received in the south during the 1960's, as well as how they protested this treatment. It gave first hand experiences of bus boycotts and sit-ins from the perspective of a ten year old black girl named Abby. As an innocent second grader, I had virtually no idea that any of these horrible racial inequalities had ever occurred! This book allowed me to really take a look at the world around me today. At the time I was attending Wilder Elementary school, which, upon reading this book, I realized was made up almost entirely of white children. Of the 500 students, there were probably a total of three black children, one of which was, and still is to this day, my best friend. After hearing about Abby's grandma's experiences with segregation during the '60's, I became very curious about the subject. It sparked in me many questions: “Do the black people at our school feel like the ones in the story?” “What else happened during that

awful time?” My curiosity motivated me to start reading more books on civil rights, as well as ask questions on the subject. In addition to that, I did a variety of research projects on topics such as Brown vs. the Board of Education and the Birmingham Church Bombing. Over the years I have learned a great deal on the subject, participated in many Martin Luther King Jr. assemblies, and even personally witnessed examples of racism, which I was able to recognize due to this influential book. In doing so, I have acquired a less innocent view of the world, and I am able to differentiate right from wrong. However, after reading *Abby Takes a Stand* and doing all of this research, the biggest question that struck me was: *Are things like this still happening today?*

Now, being a 15 year old high school freshman, I know that issues similar to racial discrimination still happen today. Although segregation does still exist to an extent, a major parallel to this time in history is the current issue involving gay rights. Similar to the African-Americans in *Abby Takes a Stand*, some people are against gays and believe that being gay is wrong. The issue of gay marriage is an especially contentious one. Although some states, including Washington, and countries, such as France, have legalized gay marriage, it is still an on-going debate. For example, after the legalization in France, riots broke out, similar to those of racist whites in the ‘60’s. This topic is especially significant at this moment because over the past two days, the United States Supreme Court has been considering the issue of gay marriage. Like racial discrimination, the battle for gay rights has been long, hard, and sometimes even dangerous; it has involved a variety of major protests and court cases. After studying discrimination due to race through reading books like *Abby Takes a Stand*, I am able to look at this situation from a different, more knowledgeable perspective. After learning about horrible situations in the past, it makes me less shocked to see the current situations, as well as more interested in learning about them and trying preventing them from happening again.

All in all, *Abby Takes a Stand* has had a great impact on the way I see the world, even to this day. It inspired me to learn more about the subject of racial discrimination; information I was then able to apply later on. I highly recommend this book to any child because I believe that everyone should be exposed to this part of history, and this book lets you experience it from a ten year old's perspective, giving it a unique point of view that children can connect to. Hopefully, this book will change others' lives as it did my own.

Works Cited:

McKissack, Pat, and Gordon C. James. *Abby Takes a Stand*. New York: Viking, 2005. Print.