and my ancestral home has been in ruins for twenty years. What my grandfather was trying to tell me is that if left alone, religion can thrive peacefully, but as soon as government gets involved, people become aggressive and it can lead to conflict.

A few weeks later, my Muslim friend joined an organization called the Muslim Civil Rights Center. Jonas first realized the true situation when he received his first memories of pain from the Giver. When I received the shock of my quiet friend joining an activist organization, I realized the depth of our problem. If this legislation were to take effect, it would be removing huge amounts of diversity from our world. If people were not allowed to wear religious garb, what would be next? Maybe we would all be regulated to uniforms like Jonas and his friends. Could our future be even worse? At this point, I returned to my solace throughout the years: books.

When I finally picked up The Giver again, I nearly put it down. It felt so light in my hands, so inconsequential; I would merely waste my time reading this. Nevertheless, I have a rule: once I pick a book up, I have to read at least a few pages before I quit. So, I started reading. Suddenly I began seeing vast similarities between our two worlds…the distant possibility that Jonas's world used to be was suddenly knocking on the door to my thoughts.

Now, everything is focused on efficiency rather than enjoying life. I actually heard someone say just before last Christmas, "I wish it would never snow, it's such a pain to shovel it all away." What if scientists find a way to stop rain? They did in Jonas's world! There is such uproar about population control…what if we start creating family units? Someone someday may create the "perfect" solution to discrimination: eliminating our hair and skin color. Is it a "trouble" to search for a college or a job for yourself? What if someone, like the Elders, decides it all for you?

That future seems to come straight out of a science fiction novel. The Giver showed me it is, in reality, an imminent future. The progression from present-day to that fabled future and the *reasons* why man would choose to live in a world where everything is the same are now evident to me. The terrible part about this story is that the reasons The Giver provides are making more and more sense every year. I can connect to the plot of this story…it contains a piercing relevance that eluded it in past years.

Now, when I see forests cut away for roads or people being replaced by automated voice machines, I remember. I remember the mundane reality that is Jonas's world. I remember that no matter how much distress humanity may cause, it is better than not feeling at all. No matter how much individuals can hurt each other with their differences, that hurt can be born. However, vibrant passionate leaders – the people that will create our world's future – cannot endure being the same as everyone else.

Now, when I see the snow, I welcome it. Coldness, sorrow, joy, and warmth are all a matter of celebration…because they prove that I am truly living, rather than sleepwalking through my life. The disasters we face make us stronger. If we did not have those, we would never progress as a species…they are crucial to our survival.