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Film Critique:

A Class Divide

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The documentary "A Class Divided" is an eye-opener into the world of prejudice and racial discrimination. Racism could be described as a misconstrued belief that one's race is better. Discrimination could be described as the refutation of equal rights and opportunities to individuals and groups as a result of prejudice or for other illogical reasons. In the film, "A Class Divided" shot in 1970, a third grade teacher in Iowa known as Jane Elliot did something that was so, bold and amazing during a period that many would have considered risky. She segregated her class by their eyes colors' and deduced ingenious ways to make the students feel discriminated against. Ms. Elliot figured that by doing this, she would leave a lasting impression in the children's minds. The teacher thought that this lesson might be taken back home and deter this children from discriminating against somebody else in the future. Ms. Elliot was just a commonplace teacher who realized that mere discussions on the topics of racial discrimination were not enough in light of the times. The murder of Martin Luther King Jr. and the increasing separation of our nation by color called for unique tactics. Upon this realization, Ms. Elliot decided to give a lesson founded on blue eyes and brown eyes that would lead to the formation of a microcosm society in her 3rd grade classroom.

The movie starts with a reunion of adults who had been participants in Ms. Elliot's third grade experiments. In this experiment, the teacher alienated the blue and brown-eyed students. She initially instills in them the belief that the blue eyed children are superior to the brown eyed. She accords the blue-eyed children with more privileges such as allowing them to drink out of the drinking fountain, while the brown eyed were forced to drink out of plastic mugs, and allowing them more play time. The teacher also said that the two groups were forbidden from playing with each other or interacting in any way. She made the blue eyed children feel as if they were

smarter, superior, and better than the brown eyed children. The next day, the teacher changes places, and informs the brown eyed kids that they are smarter, cuter, and better than their blue eyed counterparts. After the change of roles, the teacher is surprised at noting how the brown eyed children quickly forgot their previous difficulties and turned into perpetrators of discrimination.

It was sickening and worrying to watch the young children express how they felt when they saw an Indian or African American person. At this point, the film appeals to the viewer's emotions. It becomes painful to watch the children competing to give insults that describe African Americans. Seeing the demoralization, shame, lack of confidence and pain the children were experiencing while being discriminated against made me thankful. I was thankful that there was at least one person in an all-white town who had the guts to address the concern.

This documentary makes us comprehend how racial discrimination and prejudice is still rife in everyday life. It happens through name calling, physical abuse, favoritism and nepotism. The movie demonstrates to us that people, who are typically friendly and cooperative, turn nasty and discriminate when unity is jeopardized. Politicians and people in power take advantage of this human habit to turn people against each other. The most astonishing concept is the fact that when the prevailing group feels support from the teacher, they seemed to think faster and act quickly. The mental association with superiority gives the dominant group an ego boost that leads to better performance. This hypothesis could be harnessed to fit in the theory of human motivation.