

This is a letter written to Tana Rieff, author of Nobody Knows, by a six-student class at Olive-Harvey College in Chicago. It was sent by their teachers, Mamie Pettigrew and Anita Caref. Her response is below:

Oct. 14, 2015

Dear Ms. Reiff,

We are students at Olive-Harvey College in an adult education reading class in Chicago. We just finished reading the book *Nobody Knows*. Mattie inspired us with her strength and endurance. She has a strong will like many people we know.

You captured the personality of the Black people of that time. Mattie shows young women how to speak up for themselves. Your writing made it easy for us to picture and imagine being there with the family. We learned a lot about the experience of African-Americans who moved from the South to the South Side/Bronzeville. We all live on the South Side, and we really enjoyed the way you wrote about our city.

It was so interesting that we didn't want to stop. And now we want to know what happened next. Did Mattie's son make it home from the war? Did Mattie stay in the South and become the owner of the sweet shop?

We experienced many different emotions like sadness, happiness, bitterness, and compassion while reading. We learned a lot of history.

Thank you for writing this story. We hope you write back to us.

Sincerely,

Fall 2015 class:

Ms. Gloria Ogden Mr. Ronald Allen
Ms. Myron Carter Mr. Marcos Garcia
Mr. Kirk Harding Mr. Carlton
Mamie Pettigrew and Anita Caref, Instructors

Dear Olive-Harvey Fall 2015 Class:

Thank you all so much for writing to me, I love to hear from readers, and I enjoyed hearing your reactions to Nobody Knows. I especially appreciate your letter because you live in Chicago, where the story takes place.

Although, of course, I did not personally experience the migration of African-Americans from the South to the North, I read a lot about it. I formed the characters based on real experiences, and so Mattie and Nate Charles became almost real people to me. It sounds as if you felt the same way.

It was my pleasure to bring this bittersweet story to readers. Sometimes the truth is hard to hear, but we can learn from it. Getting involved with the story and characters is why reading historical fiction is so important.

And I'll tell you a little secret. I have written 20 Hopes and Dreams books, and Nobody Knows is my favorite. I'm delighted that you enjoyed it and learned from it. That warms my heart.

I wish you all the best – Ms. Gloria Ogden, Mr. Myron Carter, Mr. Kirk Harding, Mr. Ronald Allen, Mr. Marcos Garcia, Mr. Carlton, and your instructors, Mamie Pettigrew and Anita Caref. Keep on reading!

All the best, Tana Rieff