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# The Maycomb Tribune

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## “As Simple as Black and White”

Atticus Finch talks about the outcome of the Tom Robinson case and how the Court needs to change

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**Atticus Finch** is sitting behind his office desk. He’s gently wandering his fingers through his watch pocket as he stares out through his small window. “I took this case for a number of reasons,” he says breaking the amiable silence. He pauses for a minute as he wipes his forehead with a handkerchief. It is a hot day in Maycomb County, well over 40 degrees and I am sitting in Atticus Finch’s office in the Maycomb Bank Building for our interview.

“The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience,” he says recollecting his thoughts. “People are certainly entitled to think they’re right (of the outcome of Robinson’s case), and I have full respect for their opinions. But, before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself.”

The 50-year-old sits still on his chair, skewed to one side, his legs crossed and one arm resting on the back of his chair. “This case, Tom Robinson’s case, is something that goes to the essence of a man’s conscience. I couldn’t go to church and worship God if I didn’t try to help that man.”

It has been two days after Finch’s defendant, Tom Robinson, 25, was convicted for the rape of a white girl, 19-year-old Mayella Ewell. Robinson is currently doing time in Maycomb Jail before he serves his death penalty in weeks to come.



*Finch and Robinson at Monday's Court Room Hearing*

“It was either straight acquittal or nothing.” Finch says of the sentencing. “There’s something in our world that that makes men lose their heads—they couldn’t be fair even if they tried. In our courts, when it’s a white man’s word against a black man’s, the white man always wins.”

It's ugly, but it's one of the facts of life." Despite losing his case, Atticus Finch conducts himself with integrity and intelligence.

*Q: Why did you not do the expected and refuse to defend a black man?*

A: Tom is a quiet, hard working and humble man with a wife and three kids. Whether he was black or white I would have defended him because I knew that there was no way he could have committed the crime. I defended him because justice had to be done. I defended him because I knew he was a wrongly accused, innocent man.

*Q: From your perspective, why did you think Tom Robinson was an innocent man?*

A: Firstly, look and observe the evidence. All the muscles in his left arm were torn out in a cotton gin accident. Mayella Ewell was beaten up all up the right side of her face, throat and neck. There was and is more evidence to suggest that Tom is innocent rather than guilty. If you think about it, the only crime, the only crime he should be convicted of was feeling sorry for a white girl.

*Q: What was your reaction to the outcome of the trial?*

A: To begin with, this case should have never come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white. The state has not produced one iota of medical evidence to the effect that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with ever took place. Instead it has relied upon the testimony of two

witnesses whose evidence has been flatly contradicted by the defendant. My reaction is remorse that a white victim of cruel poverty and ignorance wrongly persisted in destroying the evidence of her offence by sending and innocent black man to his death bed.

*Q: Did you not think that the final decision was fair?*

A: How can it be fair when all evidence suggests that Mayella Ewell was beaten savagely by someone who led almost exclusively with his left? No it is not fair that a quiet, respectable, humble Negro who had the unmitigated temerity to "feel sorry" for a white woman is behind bars.

*Q: Would you like to further the trial?*

A: At this point justice has not yet been delivered. No one in the Court has carried the duty of sending an innocent defendant back home to his family. At the moment, I want to do everything I can to help Tom and his family. If we receive the opportunity to gain another trial, I will defend.

*Q: What is your opinion on the Court of Alabama? Is it time for change?*

A: Yes it is time for change. Not only the court, but the whole state of Alabama needs to move on from the assumption- the evil assumption- that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are immoral beings, that *all* Negro men are not to be trusted around our women. When the simple truth is, some Negroes lie, some Negroes are

immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women—black and white. This truth applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. This country needs a court where you are judged for the content of your crime rather than the colour of your skin.

*Q: What are the ideals that you think make a fair trial?*

A: Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal. We know that all men are not created equal in the sense that some people would have us believe that some people are smarter than others, some people have more opportunity because they are born with it, some people are born gifted beyond the natural scope of most men. But there is one way in this country in which all men are created equal. There is one institution that makes the stupid man the equal of an Einstein and that institution is a court. Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levellers, and in our courts all men are created equal, an ideal that should never fade through the eyes of a fair trial.

*Q: How long do you think it will take to have such a court in the state?*

A: God knows it'll be long after I've gone, but I know that my children or grandchildren will be thankful the day justice has finally come.

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