

# The Maycomb Tribune

## TO STAND DIVIDED IS TO FALL

There is a radical and pressing defect in our judicial system today. A man, whose actions might be as noble and pure as can be, whose life may have been dedicated to charity, piety and honesty, and who, most importantly, has committed no crime or sin, can stand in front of a jury of his peers and be told he is guilty, errant, sinful and criminal. Then, despite his inherent innocence, he can, on the whim of his peers, be sent off to a prison to await being killed in cold blood. I assume it is clear to the better-informed of my readers that I am not so much musing in the abstract as discussing the primitive and rather barbaric handling of the recent case of a Negro man named Tom Robinson.

The particulars of the case were not unique in their own right, but rather unexceptional. One might even say humdrum. A white woman accusing a black man of rape. How many times have we been through these motions? How many good, honest men have been tried on these charges, and how many devious? We may never know. This case stood out for entirely different reasons. This case was worthy of note because of the obviously slanderous quality of the accusations, the conspicuous falsification of events and testimonials, and above all because the lawyer

assigned to the defense actually and genuinely fought to defend Tom Robinson. The fact that this came as a shock the inhabitants of this town is a disgrace. The social climate of this town is unacceptable in this changing world of ours. We are entering a metamorphosis in the culture of our nation, and this town will not be the sole exception, the pebble left alone on the beach after the tide has swept the rest away.

It has come time to put aside our personal preferences, and view this issue through a lens entirely devoid of subjectiveness. We must be near-scientific in our decisions, for the good of our town. A prime example of this ideology in action is myself. I have lived my life with no affinity for the negro man. To be quite simple, I distrust negroes, you might even say that I dislike them. However, it has become apparent to me that I cannot stand behind a judicial system that weighs the life of one man unequal to that of another. I understood that if I continued to support such a convoluted system, I would have no ground on which to stand if, by some means, the circumstances were reversed. How could I conceivably vindicate myself if I were the defendant, fighting such insurmountable odds as Tom Robinson did so recently? Quite plainly, I could not.

In addition to this veritable epiphany, I saw that Maycomb, with our antiquated ideals and simply anachronistic practices, had fallen behind the times. In our physical seclusion, we have been left behind as the world moves haltingly towards a more fair sense of justice. This is why I so vehemently respect the actions of those citizens in our community who fight for progress in Maycomb County. These individuals, scarce though they may be, are the engines of our successful future. Men like Atticus Finch struggle to achieve what no other will deign to do. These endeavors are in every interest of our town, and yet we fight, scorn, deride and ridicule men like Mr. Finch at every point and in every imaginable way. In these actions we reduce ourselves to the level of barbarians, squabbling among ourselves.

I refuse to accept for Maycomb the fate of Rome, which fell because it simply could not adapt to fit the changing times. We are no Rome. We are Maycomb, and we will adapt.

B.B. Underwood  
Autumn 1935