

# A Shot for the Colored: The Tom Robinson Trial

*By Maudie Atkinson*

Let us, the liberal citizens of Maycomb County, start with the talk of the town, the Tom Robinson trial. He was tried for rape against Mayella Ewell and found guilty. The case had a good turn out with both the blacks and whites of Maycomb county. Some of those people came out of the courthouse happy but some of them sad or mad and even frustrated. I wasn't at the courthouse but I heard all about it when Atticus Finch, Tom Robinson's lawyer, came home. Jem and Jean Louise were furious, as was I when I heard that Tom Robinson had been found guilty.

I found myself shocked to hear that the jury had been out for four hours; however, I was not shocked that he was found guilty, even though Atticus did an amazing job of actually trying to have the jurors think about the case. Most other lawyers would just give up trying to defend a black man from a white woman and a jury of white men. Atticus made his point loud and clear because he knew that he was right. Atticus knew that he had no chance to win this case, but yet he was there for Tom when he needed the help in jail, he worked on the case all day and how do the jurors pay off his hard work? By giving the verdict that Tom is guilty even though they know that Tom is not.

Atticus was a perfect fit to this case because he has the good qualities of a loving father but and the same time he has the needed qualities to be the best lawyer anyone could hope for. He would always let the children know about the current events and the children learned to read even before they were in school. Yet in the courtroom he brings up the points that nobody else thinks of and he makes the jury think about those points. He made Tom Robinson look good in the trial while Bob Ewell looked like a fool.

Atticus made the jury think about what they wanted to do; choose the correct choice for the trial or the right choice for their own social statuses. The jury made the decision based on what they thought was the right choice, which was based on the influences they had when they were growing up and what is the right thing to do in their heads. They all thought that saying that he

was guilty would be right and safe for them because that's what everyone else would think because we are so segregated! The whites always win over the blacks even though they could be completely wrong and have all their facts messed up.

After Tom's imprisonment and unfortunate death, I was invited to tea with some of the more outspoken ladies of the community. They were talking about how their colored maids were upset and sullen and they couldn't understand why they couldn't get over the death of Tom like the white women could. They thought that they knew all the facts about colored people just because they had to live with them. But they don't. The colored people had a small glimmer of hope with the Tom Robinson trial. The thought that they might start down that road of equal rights and no discrimination, but that glimmer was shot, literally, when Tom died. They had to wrap their minds around the fact that they might be living in the same conditions as before, no rights and discrimination, for another 10, 20, who knows how many years.

Whites need to realize that they are not all high and mighty to the coloreds. The coloreds think poorly of us. They have stereotypes about us as well. They probably think that we all make them work til they drop or that all white girls, like Mayella Ewell for instance, tempt black men and then press charges. For this generation, though I'm hoping that the girls growing up now will learn from this situation and that they need to treat colored people with a good amount of respect.

We as whites need to reinvent ourselves to the coloreds and we need to spread this message out there to those who are low class or high class. The message being this; that we should change how we treat others and how we assume and make stereotypes about others. This message is what Atticus is telling us in the trial and courtroom. He is challenging the beliefs of everybody. Us, as the liberal citizens of Maycomb County, we need to tell others about this message of Atticus' and that we should put this plan into action.