



MAYCOMB County TRIBUNE

HOPE IS NOT LOST

Opinion writer - Dolphus Raymond

In the midst of the Tom Robinson trial two fair skinned children stumbled out the courthouse, and choking sobs broke the eerie silence in Maycomb's streets. I offered the children my help, and although their sentences were short, these young ones, not even 10 years old, brought more clarity to the trial than any grumbling county men would in the weeks and months following. Though those children might not understand it yet, that pain in their chest, that pain from seeing a white man treat a black man like nothing more than raw meat in the gutter, that is clarity.

Maycomb county is infected with a disease, a disease that spreads with words, a disease that clouds one's vision and makes them only see the white and the black. Just the good and the bad. The right and the wrong. These children saw how the disease kills people, and they wept. These children, with new eyes and open ears, heard what is there to be heard not only what they wish had been said.

One Sunday before the trial, my family and I attended a sermon of Reverend Sykes at First Purchase African-American Methodist Church. Somewhere in my mind, I believed my white self and my half white children would be accepted, but in reality I knew that the stares we received at First Purchase were going to be the same as the ones I received in the Maycomb streets. As I herded my children into a pew the room went silent. People stared. One man even spit in disgust. They assumed my wife married me out of fear, not out of love, just like the whites want to believe I married my wife because I'm a drunk. The disease infects both sides - makes the white only see the black and the black only see the white. Reverend Sykes though, Reverend Sykes had that clarity that I so rarely rests in a southern adult mind.

Atticus Finch has that clarity. Atticus, God bless him, had no chance in the trial, but made a good enough case that Maycomb's townspeople did



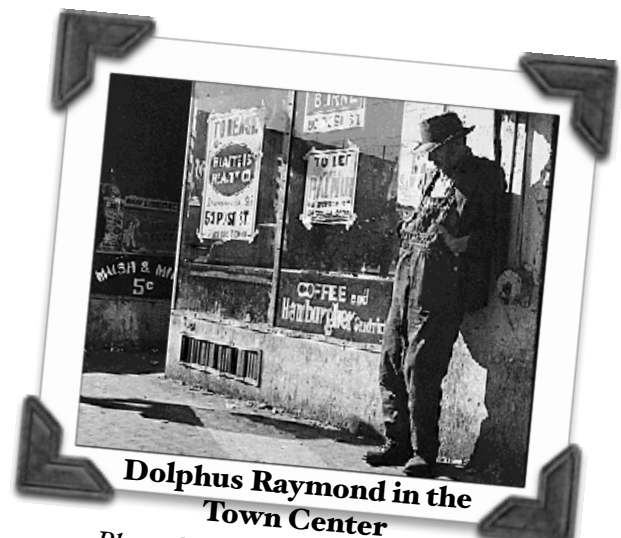
not wander back home until late in the night. The men in the jury, the ordinary men with an ordinary perspective, stayed out for as long as they did because they had a flashback. The men were struck by a sudden sense of youth, shocked into their early years. They felt sick. Before they wept like children, they slapped themselves across the face and reminded themselves of the black and the white and condemned Tom Robinson to the place of his murder. One day, I hope, men like Atticus Finch will make men accept their rejuvenation as a friend. They will shake hands and make peace in the world.

On the other hand, all of this may go faster if children like the young crying boy were placed in the jury box. Then men like Tom Robinson would be free and men like Bob Ewell would be condemned.

Now, in the twisted world we live in, Bob Ewell is dead and Tom Robinson is dead and everyone seems to be right with the world. Maycomb's people feel justified, that Tom deserved what he received and Bob Ewell was a stumbling drunk that was to drink himself dead sooner or later. Bob Ewell was not just a stumbling drunk though, and Tom was not just the crazy Negro who tried to

escape. Both were men infected with a certain kind of Maycomb's disease, and both died from it.

I believe a cure to this disease rests in the hands of children. The ones that see the world as it is. Men like Reverend Sykes and Atticus. But at this place in time, in a little town called Maycomb, the little townspeople can not handle the depth and full splendor of every shade of life. So I will continue to stumble and burp, and I will die an unsettled man surrounded by adults living in ignorant bliss. I will also die a hopeful man, hoping that no one will stare at my children; hoping that the little young boy who cried will one day save the south; praying for a cure to the disease with my last breath; and knowing. Knowing that hope is not lost. ★



**Dolphus Raymond in the
Town Center**

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