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Discrimination in a Small Town

Not one day passes when discrimination is not relevant in society. Whether it be the use of a derogatory term such as “Nigger” or the abuse of minorities, such as a Jewish person in Nazi occupied Europe. Discrimination is seen everywhere and is very relevant in the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Some examples of discrimination and false judgment involve the characters Dolphus Raymond, Tom Robinson, and Arthur Radley. This leads to the most important message of the novel, which is to not judge a person by their appearance, because that is not a good representation of their personality. Therefore, the messages in *To Kill A Mockingbird* are useful in teaching good morals to the reader and because of that, it would be illogical to ban this novel.

As mentioned, Dolphus Raymond is an example of a judgmental society. This is shown when the town of Maycomb assumes Mr. Raymond is a drunk. The town assumes this is because he constantly acting as if this is true. He does this by carrying around his drink (Coca-Cola) in a brown paper bag, which is conventionally used to hold alcoholic beverages. As Mr. Raymond says:

I try to give ‘em a reason, you see. It helps folks if they can latch on to a reason. When I come to town, which is seldom, if I weave a little and drink out of this sack, folks can say Raymond’s in the clutches of whiskey

- that's why he won't change his ways. He can't help himself, that's why he lives the way he does. (Lee 200)

The reason for this is that Mr. Raymond wishes to give the townsfolk a reason for his marriage with a black woman. This is seen as a negative decision by the town and Dolphus, in turn, is treated as a second class citizen. This is represented in the following quote. "In the far corner of the square the Negroes and Mr. Dolphus Raymond stood up and dusted their breeches... They waited patiently at the doors behind the white families" (Lee 162). This explains how Mr. Raymond was considered equal with the Blacks in Maycomb. It also shows how the white citizens of Maycomb do not pay attention to the Blacks and consider them to be lesser people than themselves. Therefore, one can see that Dolphus Raymond is treated poorly, by the white community in Maycomb, because he chooses to give the townsfolk a reason for his actions. Unfortunately, this does not give people a chance to see his real personality and causes them to harshly judge his choices.

The next example of discrimination in the novel is Tom Robinson. This example is the most obvious in the novel. For instance, this is because Tom Robinson is the man accused of the rape of Mayella Ewell. As the town begins to hear of the court case they assume that Tom Robinson is guilty because of the colour of his skin. During the case, however, many of the citizens begin to realize that the Ewells have a history of lying and that the testimonies of Mayella and Bob Ewell do not match. Though the members of Maycomb watching the court case realize this fact, the jury act oblivious to the matter that Tom is innocent. They convict him for the rape of Mayella. Unfortunately the readers, soon learn of the killing of Tom Robinson. Not only did the majority of the town

not give it a second thought, but they did not see anything wrong with this act of violence. This shows their acceptance of inequality as their unwillingness to fight for what is right. The point also shows how much they are willing to accuse a man because of his skin colour. Therefore, the lack of insight into the case caused for the jury to vote Tom guilty because of his skin colour, even though it was very obvious that he was innocent.

The final example of Maycomb's citizens judging before they know all the facts, is the life of Arthur (Boo) Radley. In the beginning of the novel, Arthur is discussed as if he is mentally unstable. An example of this is the rumor, which Miss Stephanie Crawford announces to the kids, that Arthur apparently had been cutting items out of the newspaper. Arthur had been sitting at the kitchen table, when his father walked by. Arthur then went forward and stabbed his father in the leg with the pair of scissors. He then proceeded to continue clipping items out of the newspaper as if nothing had happened. This example shows the gossip that is said around town. It also shows the image that had been established of Arthur by his neighbors. The image illustrated by the author is a scary one that shows violence and poor mental health. This is untrue, as stated later in the book of his good intentions. Near the end of the novel, the reader gains insight into Arthur's life. Later, the reader learns that when Mr. Ewell attacks Jem and Scout, Arthur hears their cries for help and rushes to help the kids. This leads to Arthur carrying Jem home (after being knocked unconscious) and then being walked home by Scout later in the evening. After Scout walks Arthur to his house later in the night, she pauses to reflect on their relationship as neighbors:

Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives. But neighbors give in return. We never put back into the tree what we took out of it: we had given him nothing, and it made me sad. (Lee 278)

This quote explains the effect the Arthur had on the kids. It shows that once someone is accepted someone and understood it is possible to find the positive in everyone. Scout was able to connect with Arthur on a personal level and feel as if they were friends. Both of these examples illustrate the point that the town relied on the gossip instead of Arthurs personal characteristics. This is unfortunate because the town sees Arthur as a scary, violent being instead of the kind, sharing man that places himself at risk in order to help others.

In other words this novel is a very good source to read about morals and important lessons. These lessons are taught through the horrible discrimination that is present in the town of Maycomb. The white population is not only discriminative against the Blacks but also against white men who do not fit in. The characters that represent this matter are Dulfus Raymond, Tom Robinson and Arthur Radley. This proves that the book should not be banned because it teaches the moral of not judging a person by their appearance but rather by their actions or personality.

Works Cited

Lee, Harper. *To Kill A Mockingbird*. United States of America: Warner Books, 1982.