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Twelve Angry Men

The film, *Twelve Angry Men*, was written by Reginald Rose and directed by Sidney Lumet. It was released in 1957, however, it still touches on issues that are relevant in today's society. The movie and play told the story of twelve jurors, who all agreed on a guilty verdict except one juror. Eventually, the jurors came to the same agreement of a not guilty verdict after reviewing the evidence and noticing the flaws in the witness' story. The film, *Twelve Angry Men* shines light on the injustice and racism that lives in our justice system.

The first issue that the film touches on is the ability of jurors to make irreversible decisions regarding somebody else's life. A lot of the time, many jurors are forced to participate against their will due to the law. Other times, jurors can have biases against the case or the suspect. This is clearly shown in the film when one of the jurors seemed to be uninterested in the trial as well as stating he almost fell asleep. He also stated "I would slap those tough kids down before they make trouble, you know? Save us a lot of time and money" (Rose, 8). In the film, the suspects, who were children, faced the risk of the death penalty if they were found guilty. How many people would want somebody who has already made up their mind about them deciding if they get to live or die? Especially, somebody who claimed they wanted to fall asleep while listening to the delivery of evidence. Unfortunately, this is the sad reality for many people who have a jury on their case.

This controversial issue can also be seen in the infamous 2012 trial of George Zimmerman who shot and killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. According to Entertainment Weekly, writer Christian Holub stated that many Americans were not satisfied with the jurors chosen for the case. The article states "There was a clear racial aspect to the jury selection," Don West said, "Rightfully or wrongfully, we were more suspicious, if you will, of African-American jurors because of the way the case was presented in the media." Don West was Zimmerman's attorney who clearly stated that he strayed away from African American Jurors. We have to ask ourselves, to who's advantage was this to. In such a racially motivated case, the public was outraged that there were no African American jurors present. According to the article, "From a pool of 750 jurors, West's style of selection ultimately resulted in eight white jurors and two Hispanic jurors, and a parallel ratio of eight women to two men." Though the movie *Twelve Angry Men* was released many decades ago, we still see issues with the people who make up the jury and who it favors today.

The film also touches on the issue of the young and incarcerated. As a society, there is a very fine line as to how to determine whether a young person should be tried as an adult or in the movie's case, sent to the death penalty. In our society, there are many cases where certain kids or young adults get a slap on the wrist and others are tried to the highest extent. According to the play, the jurors thought "The man's a dangerous killer, you could see it" while another juror responded "the man! He's a sixteen-year-old kid." (Rose, 15). The movie allows us to question how should we look at young people who are being tried? Who should decide what happens and to what extent? The young man, in this case, had a terrible start in life: he was poor, abused, and lost a parent at a young age. Who knows what led him to be in the situation he was in?

Luckily in life and in the film, there are times in which a person is willing to play devil's advocate and still appreciate the value of life. While the majority of the jurors are ready to go and have already decided on their decision, one juror takes a minute to look at all the things presented. Ideally, this is how all jurors should act. In the film, the juror states "There were eleven votes for 'guilty'. It's not easy for me to raise my hand and send a boy off to die without talking about it first." (Rose,16). The juror says he is not sure if he is guilty or innocent, but they should at least talk about the case. The value of human life should at least be worth a conversation. Too often, people or cases are seen as just another person rather than somebody worthy of having a chance.

Guilty or not guilty, that is the question the jurors have to answer. This is the common misconception most people fall victim to. When dealing with a situation there is always multiple versions of the story and then the truth. The film sheds light on the very important idea of reasonable doubt. As people who were not present, we will never have the full story. It is the job of the jurors to identify if there is reasonable doubt or not. This is really important because even today many people are falsely convicted and lose their lives or spend time in jail. People need to really reflect on if there is reasonable doubt or not rather than guilty or not guilty. The film displays how relevant it is by showing how 12 jurors went from guilty to not guilty because one person understood the idea of reasonable doubt.

All in all, the film *Twelve Angry Men* is very insightful both for its time and the present day. It shows the importance of each role of the justice system while simultaneously revealing some of its flaws. This shows us the importance of taking time to be open-minded, diligent, fully present, just, and so many other things.

Work Cited

Holub, Christian, and Christian Holub. "George Zimmerman Jurors Explain Their Controversial Verdict in 'The Jury Speaks'." *EW.com*, ew.com/tv/2017/07/24/jury-speaks-george-zimmerman-trayvon-martin/.

Lumet, Sidney, director. *12 Angry Men*.