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English 1 PAP - 2

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Should Mayella Receive Compassion?

Should Mayella Ewell receive compassion or looked at with a cold shoulder? Although what she did was abhorrent, I believe she should be worthy of compassion due to her circumstances, not her actions.

Let’s begin by explaining who Mayella is. Mayella is Bob Ewell’s oldest daughter, and they live in an abandoned shack by the dump with their seven siblings, none of which are ever there or do anything to help with the house. “Looked like there was no one there to help her,” said Tom Robinson, who was probably the only person who cared for her. He would often help her with chores on his way back from his job for no payment, which confused Mayella. As time went on, Mayella became attracted to Tom, and one day, she decided to act. She brought Tom inside to fix a door, and then tried to seduce him, which did not work. When her father returned from the woods at that time, he saw what was happening and became furious. Terrified, Tom ran away, leaving Bob alone with Mayella. There next thing we heard about her is she’s been beaten and the sheriff thinks it was Tom. Then there is a court case over this, in which Atticus, the defense attorney, brings up in his closing statement, “We don’t know, but there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Mayella was beaten by someone who led almost exclusively with their left, and Tom Robinson can only use his right.”

Due to how she was raised; without knowing what a friend is, no-one around her caring about anything, and not being accepted by anyone else because she is of mixed race; it is fair to assume she had no clue how to act around others, and will probably never learn. She ran across the one person who actually helped and cared about her, and she had no clue how to react to her emotions, so she made a rash, irrational decision and tried to cover it up by removing her problem from her sight as well as the rest of society. She did this by bringing it to court, knowing that since she came from a white family she would win the case, and got a good man killed. These actions are extremely deplorable, but once more, she did not know any better. How would she with things the way they were at home? Should we still punish her as severely for it? Even Tom felt sorry for her. “Yes, suh. I felt right sorry for her, she seemed to try more’n the rest of ‘em,” Tom said in court. Even the people she hurts the most feel sorry for her. Her circumstances were so terrible, people trying to be polite by calling her “ma’am” get accused of being rude due to never having been talked to politely before. Specifically Atticus, only trying to be polite by calling her ma’am during the case, and meeting resistance as she tells him not to, which is ridiculous. This just goes to show some of the reasons for her terrible acts.

Although she may have not known better, she still should be responsible for her actions. She has still ruined an almost completely innocent man’s life. The only thing he did wrong was he helped someone who was abandoned by the rest of society, and she gets him killed because of his race and his kindness. People should not get a ‘get out of jail free’ card on this one, but she will. The system she was put in allows for this consequence-free murder of the problems she creates, but not the ones she has placed into. “People like the Ewells will always exist, no matter what happens, things never get better for them,” said Atticus. The system became so corrupt that someone with even less credibility won a case because they were white. She should be sent to jail for her crime, and when she gets out, should be helped out of those terrible circumstances. Do not just let her continue to go unpunished for this and keep her in these terrible conditions as well. Her terrible actions have no legs to stand on and her conditions are even worse. Despite her actions having reasons, they should still have consequences.

In conclusion, Mayella Ewell is worthy of compassion for her circumstances, but definitely not much for her deplorable actions. She lives in extreme poverty without friends or a caring family, she had no clue how to react to romantic attraction at all, and she should at least be responsible for some of her actions, but almost definitely won’t. The system she lives in will help her get rid of the problems she creates, but not the ones she's placed into. Luckily, it is not as easy to do that today, right? It’s not like rape claims ruin people’s careers even though there’s no evidence. Maybe things haven't changed as much as we like to think.