

Hayley

Peralta

L.A. II

14 November 2011

The Captivating Characterization of Juror Four

“You have heard a long and complex case, gentlemen, and it is now your duty to separate the facts from the fancy... You are faced with a grave responsibility. Thank you, gentlemen” (Rose, 9). Reginald Rose’s play “Twelve Angry Men” is a thought provoking comment about the importance of the quest for justice, even through mundane and uninspiring arguments of petty men during jury duty. The jurors of this case have many different backgrounds, personalities, and opinions, pertaining to both the case and their view of life in general. While most men in this jury use their biases and former experiences to decide their vote toward the verdict, only one juror seems to consider only fact when determining his vote. This noteworthy character, Juror Four, is a rational, polished stockbroker who is not easily influenced by the trivial disputes of the other jurors. Juror Four represents a strong-willed person and an intelligent person because he looks objectively, yet carefully, at the case and is therefore one of the few who follow the judge’s instructions about deliberation on page 9.

The jury showcased in “Twelve Angry Men” is not lacking in men who have courage in their convictions, but is lacking in men who use their strength to be productive in the deliberation room, as Juror Four does. In Act III after Juror Ten goes on a discriminatory rant about the type of people who live in the slums, Juror Four says, “I’ve had enough. If you open your mouth again I’m going to split your skull. [Stands there and stares at him. No one moves or speaks]” (Rose, 60) expressing that he is intolerant of prejudice. Not fearing confrontation reveals to the

audience and other jurors, who sit in silence as Juror Four deters Juror Ten from continuing his rant, that Juror Four has a strong personality and is respected as an authoritative figure. Juror Four used courage fueled by his strong opinions to smooth the progress of the deliberation and facilitate the flow of ideas, opinions, and evidence for the discussion. Juror Four's lack of apprehension while opposing a juror with strong opinions and beliefs is a quality that all potential jurors should strive for because it not only quiets the corrupt juror, but it opens the floor to other men who may have previously been too afraid to speak out. While having uneasily persuaded opinions is important for deliberation in order to conduct a fair trial, a juror must be flexible during deliberation so there is not pointless tension and anger. At the end of the play when there are only two jurors who still vote guilty, Juror Four finally agrees, "I'm convinced. I don't think I'm wrong often, but I guess I was this once. There is a reasonable doubt in my mind" (Rose, 62) leaving Juror Three as the only juror with an opinion of the defendant's guilt. This shows that Juror Four has confidence in his opinions, but not to the point of stubborn, unreasonableness. However, Juror Four continued to faithfully defend his opinion in every way possible, until he was satisfied with the overwhelming amount of evidence against him; he realized that further argument would unnecessarily hinder the development of the conversation. Admitting one's wrongfulness, as Juror Four did after he was proven wrong, is a vital trait for any person to possess because it not only benefits most personal relationships, but pleading guilty can even lessen the punishment for a criminal in a court trial. In conclusion, Juror Four has courage in his convictions, but is able to be persuaded after thorough discussion of the topic.

Although intelligence and how a person applies that knowledge is something many people don't appreciate, Juror Four was able to prove just how beneficial it can be in the jury room. In the beginning of Act III when half the jurors vote guilty and the other half vote not

guilty, Juror Four revives the topic of the old man's testimony by remarking, "I am saying that the old man may have been wrong about how long it took him to get to the door but he may have been right about whom he saw running down the stairs. Now it may have taken the murderer about thirty-nine seconds to wipe away all the finger prints and get down the stairs to the place where the old man saw him..." (Rose, 49) commenting on evidence none of the other jurors had thought of. At the beginning of the play, Juror Four says that he went to college and became a stockbroker, proving that he is an educated man who utilizes his intellectual knowledge to support his ideas and find faults in the ideas of others. The quote shows that Juror Four is able to take evidence that all the other jurors had agreed was true, look for a possible error in it, and put it into question. Juror Four follows his argument by applying his knowledge to the case by formulating a plan to prove whether or not the evidence is true. Many people have factual knowledge, some have the skills to apply their knowledge in everyday life, but few have the rationalizing skills to determine how to use their knowledge and skills in any situation they may be put in- such as jury duty. Juror Four uses his knowledge and skills early on in the deliberation process when the other jurors become engaged in superficial disputes; Juror Four states, "I don't see any need for arguing like this. I think we ought to be able to behave like gentlemen" (Rose, 16) making the deliberation run smoother. Even this early in the play, Juror Four communicates his problem-solving skills and level-headedness. He sees no rational reason to involve emotions in deliberation because it will not contribute to a just verdict or a fair trial; Juror Four imposes this belief on the other jurors throughout the entire play in an attempt to keep the discussion based strictly on the information given to them during the trial. This belief in limiting the involvement of feelings is valuable in many real life situations because people tend to employ

personal emotions in inappropriate situations. In a case where the defense failed to properly dispute evidence, intelligence and rationality proved vital to a fair trial.

Juror Four influenced the deliberation process and the other eleven jurors by using his intelligence to prove and disprove evidence, using his strong leadership to facilitate the movement of the discussion, and by not letting his emotions sway how he voted. Juror Four was the only successful juror according to the judge's deliberation instructions in the beginning of the play, because he considered only facts and took his responsibility seriously. If Juror Four were actually a member of society, people might view him as extremely apathetic because of his strong personality and courage of convictions or rude because of his tendency to correct people who are speaking or acting inappropriately or wrongfully. However, such people should remember that Juror Four simply has a different focus and intention for the situation. The way to avoid a misunderstanding of his character is to be tolerant of his strength and intelligence, as well as other characteristics of any other people they may encounter.

Rose, Reginald; Sergal, Sherman L. *Twelve Angry Men: A Play in Three Acts*. 1988 ed.

Woodstock: Dramatic Publishing, 1983. Script.