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An analysis of racial injustice and discrimination in
the segregated South in Ernest Gaines' *A Lesson
Before Dying* and Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*

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Victoria Christina Knopf

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emer. o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this diploma thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references, either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors have been truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

Victoria Knopf

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Abbreviations

ALBD: *A Lesson Before Dying*

TKAM: *To Kill A Mockingbird*

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1. Introduction

The first time I read novels by writers from the South was during a literature seminar on recent Southern fiction held by Professor Zacharasiewicz. Just before attending this course, I had visited the Southern states of the USA and familiarized myself with the culture and history of this part of America. Therefore, the topic of that seminar was immediately very intriguing to me and made me have a closer look at southern fiction even after the seminar was over, and it soon became clear that my diploma thesis would concern itself with this part of the United States and its literature. As a result, I chose to focus on two well-known authors from the South, namely the African-American writer Ernest Gaines and the white author Lee Harper, because their two novels *A Lesson Before Dying* and *To Kill A Mockingbird* respectively have fascinated me from the first time I read them. As a result, I was trying to find a way to combine these two books and in the end I decided to write about the racial injustice and discrimination that black Americans had to face in the segregated Deep South, especially in the courtroom, as both novels focus on African-Americans who have to stand trial for crimes they did not commit and were sentenced by an all-white jury. Furthermore, I will not only focus on the injustice in segregated courtrooms, but also on the discrimination of black people in general and how this is depicted in the two novels.

In this thesis I want to explore and analyze both novels according to these topics. First of all, I want to describe the life of Ernest Gaines and Lee Harper because in my opinion their life is quite significant in order to understand their works since both novels also contain autobiographical elements, especially *To Kill A Mockingbird* was highly inspired by Lee's personal experiences while growing up in the segregated state of Alabama as the daughter of a lawyer. The next chapter will deal with thematic background information, for example the history of the Deep South and two of its states that form the setting of the two novels, Louisiana and Alabama. In addition to that, I will focus on the history of slavery, the time of segregation and Jim Crow laws and the Civil Rights Movement. Moreover, I will provide information on real trials during the time of segregation where the black defendants had to face a prejudiced jury and were

often found guilty when they were in fact innocent. I will then have a close look at the two novels and analyze how racial injustice and discrimination is represented.

2. Biography of Ernest James Gaines

Ernest James Gaines was born on River Lake Plantation near Oscar, Louisiana, in Point Coupee Parish on January 15, 1933. Gaines said of his hometown that he "came from a place where people sat around and chewed sugar-cane and roasted sweet potatoes and peanuts in the ashes and sat on ditch banks and told tales and sat on porches and went into the swamps and went into the fields - that's where I came from" (Lowe 224).

Gaines' mother Adrienne was only sixteen years old when Ernest Gaines was born as the first of seven children. Adrienne Gaines and her husband and Ernest Gaines' father Manuel both worked as sharecroppers on a plantation. Gaines' father left the family when Ernest was only eight years old, and because of that Gaines does not have many memories of his father; he does, however, recall many episodes from his childhood. When Adrienne was left by her husband, she was forced to move to New Orleans to find a job with a better salary. There she met her later husband Ralph Colar, a merchant marine, and she had five more children with him. She left her first seven children in the care of Miss Augusteen Jefferson, the children's crippled great aunt and Adrienne's maternal grandfather's sister. From Augusteen Jefferson, Gaines learned about the value of discipline, which had a vast influence on him as well as her ability to deal with her disability (see Carmean 1-2).

During the 1930s when Gaines was still very young, the Great Depression hit the South and as a result, he had to start working in the fields when he was only eight years old. During the school months, he attended an elementary school in a close-by church for black students and there Gaines learned all the basic skills and soon became a quite gifted student. He started writing when he attended the black Catholic school St. Augustine from 1945 on. In 1948 Gaines left Louisiana and joined his mother and her husband in Vallejo, California (see Carmean 2-3).

It was in the public library of Vallejo where the teenaged Gaines found his passion for Southern and Russian writers, and soon he started writing a novel

and sent it to a publisher who rejected it. After graduating from High School in 1951, he went to a Junior College and graduated in 1953. Then he joined the U.S. Army and was stationed in Guam. In 1955 he had saved enough money to attend the San Francisco State College. There he was finally able to have his work published in a college literary magazine (see T. Davis, 130-133). In 1957 Gaines graduated and won a Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Award, enabling him to study at Stanford University.

In 1964 Gaines' first novel *Catherine Carmier* was published. His second novel *Of Love and Dust* came out in 1967, followed by the short story collection *Bloodline* one year later. In 1971, the novel *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* was issued and became a best-seller, was later turned into a TV movie and was even nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. In 1978, Gaines' fourth novel *In My Father's House* was published. In the early 1980s, he also started teaching at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and in 1983, the novel *A Gathering of Old Men* came out and was later also turned into a TV movie. A few years later he met his future wife Dianne Saulney and the two married in 1993, when Gaines was 60 years old. In the same year, his latest novel, *A Lesson Before Dying*, was published (see Carmean 8-10).

3. Biography of Harper Lee

Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926 as the youngest of four siblings in Monroeville in the state of Alabama. Monroeville is a small town in Monroe County with approximately 6500 inhabitants. Her first name Nelle is a tribute to her grandmother, Ellen Rivers Williams, and Nelle is Ellen spelled backwards. Her mother was Frances Cunningham Finch and her father, Amasa Loleman Lee, was a lawyer and probably the inspiration for the *To Kill A Mockingbird* character Atticus Finch. The young Harper Lee had access to an old typewriter and soon began writing stories on it. She went to school in her hometown Monroeville and was a quite gifted and diligent student. After graduating from high school, Lee started studying first at Huntingdon College in Montgomery and then at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. From 1947 to 1949, she studied law, but in the end she did not fulfill the requirements for it and eventually left Alabama to go to New York City without completing her law studies (see Petry xvi-xvii).

In New York she found work as an airline reservation clerk and spent her free time writing stories. She showed her stories to an editor who recommended turning one of these short stories into a novel, which would later become *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Finally, the novel was published in July 1960. The book quickly became a big success and it was highly praised by critics all over the world (see Petry xvii-xviii).

In 1961 Lee received the Pulitzer Prize for her first and so far only published novel, as well as the Alabama Library Association award and the Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. One year later the novel won the Bestsellers' Paperback of the Year Award and was also turned into a movie (see Mancini 12-13).

After the publication of her novel, Lee hardly gave any interviews. In 2007 she suffered a stroke and is now wheelchair-bound and nearly blind and deaf, living in an assisted-living facility in Alabama. Although Lee has stated on numerous occasions that she will never publish another book, in February 2015 it was

announced that a second book by Lee is due to be published in July 2015. Lee wrote this novel in the 1950s, entitled *Go Set A Watchman*, before the publication of the successful novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*, however *Go Set A Watchman* is a sequel to *To Kill A Mockingbird* (see *Wikipedia* "Harper Lee" February 26, 2015).

4. Thematic Background

Much of our history has not been told; our problems have been told, as if we have no history. So much of our literature deals with the big-city ghettos, and we existed long before we came to the big city. We came to this country as slaves, primarily to till the land. [...] I think there is much beauty there, much strength there. [...] I think we've made tremendous sacrifices we've shown tremendous strength. (Tarshis, p. 74) ¹

Since both writers, Ernest Gaines and Harper Lee, grew up in the Deep South and both novels chosen for this thesis are set in that region as well, I want to take a closer look at the Deep South, the history of African-Americans and the Civil Rights Movement before analyzing the two novels. Understanding these major issues is crucial when dealing with the books *A Lesson Before Dying* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

4.1. The Deep South

The peculiar history of the South has so greatly modified it from the general American norm that, when viewed as a whole, it decisively justifies the notion that the country is - not quite a nation within a nation, but the next thing to it. (Larson 6)

4.1.1. Defining the term

In the book *Sex, Race and Science*, its author Edward J. Larson describes the Deep South as follows: "No certain boundaries delineated the 'Deep South' and isolated it from the rest of the country. The phrase described a state of mind as much as a geographic entity." (3) J. William Harris refers to the Deep South as "a place frozen in time, marked by violent extremes of action and belief, yet, in the hands of its writers and musicians, touched by profundity." (*Deep Souths* 1)

¹ Excerpt taken from an interview with Ernest J. Gaines: Tarshis, Jerome. "The Other 300 Years: A Conversation with Ernest J. Gaines, Author of The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman." 1974. In Lowe, John (ed). *Conversations with Ernest Gaines*.

Until the American Civil War, the Deep South was also called the Lower South in contrast to the Upper South, the northern part of the Southern United States. (see *Wikipedia* "Deep South" February 26, 2015)

The Deep South is a specific sub-region of the Southern part of the United States. However, there is no set definition of which states belong to the Deep South and which do not. The most common definition lists five states, namely Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina (see *Wikipedia* "Deep South" 26.02.2015). Davis and Gardner list the same five states, but also add Florida to their list. (see A. Davis and Gardner 3) The encyclopedia of Southern history lists a more precise definition of the Deep South, which includes the "states of Mississippi and Louisiana, the southern portions of Georgia and Alabama, and northern Florida." ("Deep South" *Encyclopedia of Southern History*)

Even today, there is no consensus among scholars what states belong to the Deep South and which do not, however, all studies agree that Louisiana and Alabama both belong to the Deep South and these two states are also the setting of the novels to be analyzed.

4.1.2. Brief historical overview of the Southern United States

Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all. (Faulkner *Absalom! Absalom!* 142).

Due to the fact that Ernest Gaines and Harper Lee are natives of Louisiana and Alabama respectively, and both of their novels are set in these states, I will give some basic information about these two States, including their history, geography and culture.

The first people who occupied a region in the southern United States were the Paleo-Indians in 9500 BC. In the 16th century, Hernando de Soto was the first European to lead an expedition exploring the southern United States. This

journey with 700 men took three years and was mainly a fruitless search for gold. The Spanish were also the first Europeans who could establish the first permanent settlement in the South, namely in St. Augustine, Florida in 1565. However, the Spanish were not the only ones exploring this region. The French had tried to establish a settlement near Jacksonville, but it was soon destroyed by the Spanish. As a result, the French decided to explore the continent from the north. They already had settlements around the Great Lakes and began to explore the Mississippi River basin. In addition to the French and Spanish settlers, also the British established settlements and outposts in the South, the first one on Roanoke Island, North Carolina in 1585. This outpost was soon given up, but a few years later, in 1607, the first permanent colony was founded by the English in Jamestown, Virginia. The conditions in Jamestown were very difficult and many of the settlers died within the first few months. However, they received help from members of a local Indian tribe who shared their corn harvest with the settlers, thus rescuing the lives of most of them. With the support of Native Indians and also from their home country, the colony in Jamestown did much better in its second year and Virginia became a very important colony. (see Harris, *American South*, 5-8)

In the 17th century, more and more plantations were established in the rural South, mostly in Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina. The colonists who lived in these States had to depend highly on agriculture. A major source of income was tobacco, which was first introduced in 1613. Two years later, Virginia shipped 2,000 lbs of tobacco to England, and in 1622 that number had risen to 60,000 lbs. (see Harris, *American South* 10) Very soon, African slaves started to arrive in the South, but it took another two centuries until slavery reached its height. Other exports included rice, cotton and indigo. A very important city for export was Charleston in South Carolina. Due to the high profitability of exporting cotton, many more colonists arrived in the South and new plantations were founded in Georgia. The dependency on slaves in the South led to tensions between the northern and southern States, because the industrialized northern United States did not have to rely on slavery. By the beginning of the 19th century, all northern States had abolished slavery. The

Mason-Dixon Line marked the border between the slave-free northern States and the agricultural southern States.

When Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860, the southern States decided to secede from the Union, which resulted in the Civil War that was ultimately won by the northern States. The years after the Civil War are known as the Reconstruction Era, a time when all the southern States had to abolish slavery and were reintegrated into the United States. With the 13th and 14th Amendments, the African-American population of the South received many new rights, but this development also led to a reaction of white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, and later to the introduction of Jim Crow laws in the Deep South. Black people in the South tried to escape the racism and segregation and migrated in large numbers to northern cities. Resistance against racism and segregation started in the 20th century with the formation of the Civil Rights Movement and most of the leaders were from the South. Finally, in the 1960s, the Jim Crow rules were outlawed. The "New South" does not depend so much on agriculture anymore, although it still remains an important economic sector. However, the South is now highly industrialized and many major US-cities can now be found in that region.

4.1.2.1. Louisiana

Gaines called his home Louisiana the "most romantic and interesting of all southern states - the land, the language, the colors, the bayous, the fields - all these things together [...] make it an interesting place. If I were to come from any southern state, I think Louisiana is the one that I would choose." (Lowe 68).

Louisiana is a southern state that belongs to the Deep South. It borders Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico, and its capital is Baton Rouge. The largest city, however, is New Orleans. The total population of Louisiana is 4.6 million. The majority is white (63 %) whereas the number of African-Americans amounts to 30 %. The official language is English, which is also the first language of most people in Louisiana, however, due to its French influence, French is spoken by almost 5 %. The state is mostly Protestant, but 28 % are

Roman Catholic. Furthermore, Louisiana is not divided into counties as other states, but into 64 parishes.

Louisiana has a quite long history; the first traces of permanent human settlement go back 5,500 years. As already mentioned above, one of the first European explorers to set foot into Louisiana was the Spanish Hernando de Soto in the mid-16th century. When following the Mississippi River, the explorers encountered several hostile tribes who attacked them. In the 17th centuries French settlers came to Louisiana and gave the state the name Louisiana, in honor of King Louis XIV. Originally, Louisiana stretched from the Great Lakes in the north all the way to the Gulf of Mexico in the south. In 1722 New Orleans became the capital of Louisiana. As a result of the Seven Years War, France lost a great amount of its territory in America to the British and Spanish; only New Orleans and the parishes around Lake Pontchartrain stayed under French rule, however, many French people continued to settle in all of Louisiana. (see Wikipedia "*History of Louisiana*" May 6, 2015) Many settlers were refugees from Acadia, Nova Scotia, who were expelled from their region in Canada. Their descendants became known as Cajuns. Under Napoleon Bonaparte, Louisiana was repossessed by the French in order to establish a large empire in America. However, this idea failed and the territory of Louisiana was sold to the United States in 1803 for sixty million francs. With the Louisiana Purchase, the USA under President Jefferson doubled its size. In 1812, Louisiana became a U.S. State and in 1849 Baton Rouge became the new capital.

Louisiana was also one of the "slave states" and one of the biggest slave markets established in New Orleans, and it soon became a very wealthy state. Although Louisiana had many slaves, it also had a great number of free blacks. When the Civil War broke out, Louisiana was one of the States that seceded from the Union and joined the Confederate States of America. Louisiana was soon occupied by the Union after only one year. Furthermore, the formerly wealthy state suffered a great economic loss. However, with the discovery of sulphur and oil the economy was able to recover. (see Louisiana Government "Louisiana History" April 12, 2015)

4.1.2.2. Alabama

The State of Alabama lies in the southeast of the USA and borders Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and the Gulf of Mexico. Its population amounts to 4,8 million. The capital is Montgomery, but the largest city is Birmingham. It is also known as the "Cotton State". 69 % of all people are white, whereas 26 % are African-Americans. Most people (61 %) are Protestants. Alabama is commonly divided into five provinces: the highland-rim, the Cumberland Plateau, the Appalachian Ridge and Valley, the Piedmont, and the coastal plain. (see Rogers 17)

The first Native-Americans that settled in the region what is nowadays Alabama, first came there about 12,000 years ago. The first European explorers who settled in Alabama were Spanish and they called the territory that extended to the state of Florida "La Florida". The region was also colonized by the British and French and as a result, many military posts were established. In 1819 Alabama was integrated into United States of America. The state's capital was changed several times until Montgomery became its capital in 1846.

After the invention of the cotton gin, many large plantations developed in Alabama and the cotton industry became a very profitable business and turned Alabama into a very wealthy state. The plantations depended heavily on slave workers and as a result, thousands of slaves were sold to Alabamian plantation owners. After Abraham Lincoln had been elected president of the United States, the government of Alabama seceded from the Union and joined the Confederate States and its capital Montgomery became the first capital of the Confederates. Their president Jefferson Davis was elected in Montgomery. Only a very limited number of battles were fought on Alabamian soil, but many men from Alabama fought in the war.

After the Civil War, Alabama was put under the rule of the US Army and in 1868, when Alabama ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, the state was readmitted to the Union. The abolishment of slavery led to tensions between the white and black population and segregation was fully institutionalized at the turn of the century and lasted until the 1960s. The bus boycott in Montgomery played a key event in the Civil Rights Movement. During the Great Migration a large number of African-Americans left Alabama and migrated to cities like

Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit and Cleveland in order to find better jobs and a safer life. The Ku Klux Klan temporarily gained great power in Alabama and was responsible for the lynching of many black citizens.

4.1.3. Slavery

From the 17th until the 19th century, slavery was very common in the United States, a country that is nowadays associated with freedom and liberty for all. Even most of the early presidents were by no means opponents of slavery and the slave trade since eight of the first twelve presidents owned slaves (see Kolchin 3)

Because of the low number of people living in the Thirteen Colonies at that time, the white population quickly began to depend on slaves who did the hard work on the plantation fields. Many early immigrants from Europe saw the new continent as a paradise where they could become wealthy fast, for example by finding gold. However, this dream did not last long, because it soon became clear to the colonists that in order to survive in this new land, they had to work hard. The first slaves arrived from Africa in Jamestown in the year 1619, a time when the colonies were not yet independent from the British Empire. Especially the southern States Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia were agrarian-oriented and most of the slaves were sold to southern landowners. Before African slaves were brought to America, there were several attempts to enslave Native Americans, but these efforts were not successful, because there were not enough Native Americans and many died of new diseases brought over from Europe. (see Kolchin 7)

Due to the many colonies the British Empire had in Africa at that time, acquiring enough slaves was fairly easy. Many laws regarding slaves were enacted at the end of the 17th century: slaves were not allowed to leave the property unless their "master" gave them permission, they were not allowed to vote, interracial marriages were prohibited and Africans did not have the right to carry guns. Moreover, all the children of slaves automatically became slaves too. (see Christian 27-28) At that time prejudices against black people started to form;

one of the earliest preconceptions was that the black skin color is the result of a lack of hygiene. Furthermore, blacks were believed to be primitive and cultureless and therefore inferior. (see Kolchin 14)

In the first half of the 18th century about 40,000 Africans arrived in America every year. This number increased to 80,000 slaves each year by the end of the century. (see Blackburn 384) At the beginning of the slave trade, tobacco was the main economic sector which was mainly grown in the upper southern States, most importantly Virginia, while the lower South depended on rice. In contrast to the southern states, slaves were not common in the North, where keeping slaves was considered a non-essential luxury. The main reason for that was the relative lack of plantations in the northern territories and the few slaves worked as servants inside the house. Furthermore, many northern States abolished slavery in the revolutionary era, for example Vermont, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. (see Kolchin 73)

With the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, which made growing cotton very profitable, the demand for slaves in the southern States increased rapidly, although the international slave trade became illegal in 1808. At the same time, 75 % of all blacks north of the Ohio River were already free and the number of freed Africans continued to climb until 1840 when almost all blacks in the north were free. (see Kolchin 81) This development led to tensions between the northern and southern States because the Southerners feared that they had to give up slavery and therefore explicitly insisted on their right to own slaves.

The prohibition of the international slave trade did not prevent an internal slave trade. As a result, many slave families were broken up and lost all contact to their relatives. After the invention of the cotton gin, many large plantations developed in the Deep South, which led to a significant rise in the annual cotton production, namely from 3,000 bales in 1790 to 178,000 in 1810. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the annual cotton production amounted to more than 4 million bales. (see Kochrin 95)

The work on the cotton plantation was far more difficult and demanding than the work on tobacco fields and caused the deaths of many slaves. The treatment of slaves depended highly on their owner. Some slaveholders or overseers treated their slaves fairly humanely, others, especially owners of very large plantation, punished their slaves rigorously. The most frequent punishments included whipping, branding and imprisonment.

In 1861 the American Civil War broke out and lasted until 1865. President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 that freed all slaves who were behind the enemy lines by the Union armies. Even before the Emancipation Proclamation many slaves had fled to the states of the Union. The Confederate States surrendered in 1865 and the Emancipation Proclamation was enforced in the whole country. Later that year, the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, freeing all remaining slaves. Although African-Americans were now free, they had to face new challenges with the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 that paved the way for racial segregation.

4.1.4. The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement pursued the goal to end racial segregation in the United States. The term mostly refers to the nonviolent protests and struggles from 1955 to 1968, but there were several other attempts to end racism before 1955. A key event was the U.S. Supreme Court decision regarding the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which deemed the separate education of whites and blacks as unconstitutional. This decision helped to establish protest movements in many parts of the USA, especially in the South where segregation was most prevalent. One action that was taken by blacks was the Montgomery Bus Boycott that began in 1955 when the black woman Rosa Parks did not give up her seat to a white passenger on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. She was arrested and eventually convicted. This led to a 381 days bus boycott by African-Americans, who were the majority of bus passengers in the city, and was finally over when the buses were desegregated. This boycott also gave fame to Martin Luther King Jr, who was one of the leaders of the

boycott. While the bus boycott was taking place in Montgomery, the African-American Autherine Lucy was admitted to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, the first black student there. However, she was informed that she could not stay at the dormitory with the white students nor eat at the cafeteria. Very soon protests and riots began and eventually resulted in Lucy's suspension due to safety concerns. Her lawyers tried to overturn the university's decision, but it took more than three decades until the expulsion was annulled by the University of Alabama's board of trustees in 1988. Autherine Lucy eventually received her master's degree in 1992, at the age of 63. (see *Encyclopedia of Alabama* May 6, 2015)

The Civil Rights Movement reached its climax with the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, in which approximately 200,000 people, including many whites, participated. Among the main goals of the march was the demand for equal and fair employment and education, the right to vote and decent housing. In 1964 the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson which "banned discrimination based on 'race, color, religion, sex or national origin' in employment practices and public accommodations." (*Wikipedia* "African-American Civil Rights Movement 1954-68" April 11, 2015)

One year later the Civil Rights Act was followed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which resulted in a big increase in African-American voting registration. Finally, in 1968 another bill was signed by Johnson, the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which "prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, natural origin." (*Wikipedia* "African-American Civil Rights Movement 1954-68" April 11, 2015)

4.2. Injustice and discrimination in the USA

While many former slaves after the Civil War hoped to receive the same rights as whites, the reality proved to be much different. After the Reconstruction period, slaves were freed, but they were still regarded as inferior to white people. The Fourteenth Amendment gave equal protection to all citizens of the United States, including blacks; however, in the 1890s racial segregation was made possible by the "separate but equal" status for all African-Americans. In theory that meant that blacks and whites should be separated, but still receive equal treatment, but in practice this led to unequal conditions. The laws that legalized racial segregation in the South are known as the "Jim Crow laws".

4.2.1. Racial segregation

According to Fisher, segregation is

a complex system of laws and mores wherein caste distinctions are expressed in terms of physical distance, evolved in the South for many reasons- white anxieties and squeamishness, political opportunism, above all a white desire to subordinate Negroes through ostracism and public humiliation. (1088)

Racial segregation was a major problem in all States, but it was most prevalent in the Southern States. It began with the Supreme Court decision in 1896 in Plessy v. Ferguson that separate facilities for blacks and whites were legal as long as they were equal. Homer Plessy was one-eighth Negro who was forced to sit in the "colored" section of a Louisiana train and refused to do so, leading to his arrest. Consequently, Plessy fought a legal battle which he ultimately lost with the Plessy v. Ferguson decision.

As a result, black people had to attend different schools, churches and hospitals and they had to live in different parts of towns. Furthermore, they had to use different rest rooms, entries and even different water fountains. Furthermore, due to the grandfather clauses, black people were denied their right to vote.

Many states also prohibited interracial marriages. Racial segregation existed in the northern States as well, but to a lesser degree.

In addition to that, the public transportation system distinguished between blacks and whites by assigning a few designated rows for blacks at the back of the busses and a separate black-only car on trains. When an African-American wanted to go by bus, he or she had to buy the bus ticket from the driver in the front and then exit the bus and walk to the back door to re-enter the bus there. In some cases, the white bus driver just drove off after the black had purchased a ticket and exited the bus. Black people were only allowed to sit in the designated seats in the back of the bus and if there were no more seats left, they had to stand, even if there were still empty seats in the white sections. If all the seats in the front of the bus were taken and a white person entered the bus, the black people who were sitting nearest the front had to get up and offer their seat to the white person. Moreover, all the black people of that row were expected to give up their seats, so that a white person never had to sit next to African-Americans. The bus driver was in charge of making sure that all the black people followed these rules and if one failed to do so, the bus driver reminded the black passengers of the rules and could also expel black people from the bus. Different seats for blacks were also assigned in movie theaters, where black people had to sit on balconies. (see Johnson, *Understanding* 83-84)

4.2.2. Racial injustice

The Jim Crow laws also excluded African-Americans from juries which led to all-white juries. The Supreme Court ruled in the case *Virginia v. Rives* in 1879 that an all-white jury does not necessarily mean that the jury is biased and the defendant discriminated against. However, there are numerous cases where black people were found guilty by all-white juries, although there was almost no evidence to do so. On the other hand, these juries acquitted several white people who were accused of a crime against black people, one of these cases that gained notoriety was the murder of the black teenager Emmett Till. In 1955, this teenager allegedly flirted with a white woman in Mississippi who reported

this incident to her husband. Subsequently, her husband and his half-brother kidnapped Till, shot him and mutilated his body. The two white men were arrested and had to stand trial. The jury consisted of twelve white men who, after hearing all the testimony, acquitted both men after debating for only one hour. Both men later admitted that they were responsible for Till's death, however, they did not have to stand trial again. The acquittal of the two murderers led to numerous protests among the African-American population and many scholars see this case as a key event in the Civil Rights Movement.

Although this diploma thesis deals with two fictional books that center around two fictional trials, they do have real counterparts. In the 20th century, especially during the time of racial segregation, a number of African-Americans were tried and found guilty by an all-white jury for crimes they supposedly committed against white people. Many of these cases bear a striking resemblance to the two fictional characters and their trials, Jefferson and Tom Robinson. In the following section several real cases will be presented in order to fully understand the main theme of the two novels, injustice and racism in the courtroom, and to sharpen the comprehension of both novels.

4.2.2.1. The Scottsboro Boys

In March 1931 nine black teenagers took a freight train from Tennessee to Alabama and presumably got into a fight with a group of white boys who subsequently reported the attack to the police. The train was stopped by police at Paint Rock, Alabama, and the nine teenagers were arrested. Two women on the train reported to the police that they had been raped by the blacks. After the arrest and the serious charges against the boys were made public, a lynch mob gathered at the jail of Scottsboro. Blacks were disqualified from jury duty as a common practice in the segregated South, thus resulting in an all-white jury. Less than two weeks after the arrest, the trials began. The lawyer Milo Moody volunteered to defend the boys. Due to the furious mob, Moody asked for a change of venue, but Judge Hawkins refused. Eight of the nine boys were found guilty and sentenced to death by electric chair. Three days before the executions, the Alabama Supreme Court ordered a stay of execution and the

case eventually reached the United States Supreme Court, which granted a new trial for all the defendants.

In 1933 the new trials began in Decatur, Alabama, with a new defense attorney, the State was represented by prosecutor Thomas Knight. The first to be tried was Haywood Patterson. This time it lasted much longer than in Scottsboro and while one of the victims continued to claim she had been raped, the other victim testified that the rape had never occurred. Although one girl had admitted that neither of them had been raped, the jury still returned a guilty verdict and sentenced Patterson to death. In a heroic move Judge James Edwin Horton ordered a new trial for Patterson and postponed the trials of the other defendants because he realized that the defendants would not get a fair trial at that point. As a result, he was not re-elected again as a Judge in the fall of that year. However, one of the Scottsboro boys was tried anyway and sentenced to death, but the execution was delayed pending appeal. In addition to that, Patterson was tried again and given the death penalty once more.

In 1935, after the defendants had already been incarcerated for four years, a new trial for Patterson began. This time an African-American was allowed to serve, the first black since the Reconstruction period. Patterson was sentenced to 75 years in prison. Two years later, charges against four of the boys were dropped and they were released from prison, while the other ones were all given long prison sentences. In 2013, after all the Scottsboro boys had already died, a pardon was granted to three of the defendants whose conviction had not been overturned. (see Johnson, *Understanding* 15-20)

4.2.2.2. George Junius Stinney, Jr.

Stinney was accused of murdering two white children in South Carolina in 1944 when he was 14 years old. He was arrested because he was the last known person that spoke to the two murdered girls. Stinney maintained his innocence at the trial, which lasted for only one day, but was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to death by the electric chair. The jury consisted of twelve white men and they only took 10 minutes to find Stinney guilty as charged. A few months

later Stinney was executed in Columbia, SC. Almost 70 years later a motion for a new trial was filed and in 2014 he was exonerated. Stinney is the youngest person ever executed in the United States. (see Robertson 28).

4.2.2.3. Mack Charles Parker

Mack Parker allegedly raped a pregnant white woman in Mississippi in 1959. Until his death later that year, Parker had always maintained his innocence and many researchers nowadays believe that he was indeed innocent and the alleged victim made up the rape story in order to conceal an affair she had been having with another white man. Although there was no other evidence that would implicate Parker, he was arrested and sent to prison. Before his trial began, a lynch mob got access to the jail and kidnapped and shot Parker. Even though some of the men who were part of the lynch mob that night later admitted to be responsible for the murder, nobody was ever convicted. It is not known if Parker actually raped the woman or not, but whatever the case may be, he would have deserved a fair trial. (see Mississippi Civil Rights Project "Lynching of Mack Charles Parker" April 12, 2015)

4.2.2.4. Michael Donald

Michael Donald was a black man from Alabama who was murdered by two members of the Ku Klux Klan in 1981. The crime is known as the last official lynching in the USA. The murder was triggered by a trial in Mobile, where a black man was accused of murdering a white policeman, and the jury, which consisted of white and black members, could not reach a verdict and had to declare a hung jury. This angered many white racists who believed that this case clearly showed that African-Americans could get away with murder and as a result, two KKK members decided to murder the first black person they encountered. They killed Michael Donald and hung him from a tree. It took over two years until the two alleged murderers were arrested and had to stand trial. One of them was sentenced to death and executed in 1997, while the other man received a life sentence. The execution of one of the murderers was the first execution in Alabama for a white-on-black crime and at the same time the

first time a member of the KKK was executed. (see Equal Justice Initiative "Michael Donald", April 12, 2015)

4.2.3. Injustice and discrimination today

Although only 13 % of all Americans are black and African-Americans are therefore a minority, the number of non-white prisoners is 40 %. Whites have only a 4 % chance of being incarcerated once in their life, whereas that number for blacks amounts to 28 %. Furthermore, blacks account for over 40 % of all inmates currently on death row. (see *Wikipedia* "Race in the United States criminal justice system" April 11, 2015)

Nowadays, juries often consist of people of mixed races, but there is no law banning all-white juries. Moreover, it seems that even in the 21st century black people are still discriminated against, especially by law enforcement officers. In the last few months there were several cases that received worldwide attention where black people were shot by white police officers in the United States and these events led to many protests and demonstrations. The shooting of African-American Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, gained attention from many countries and led to peaceful and violent protests in Ferguson and other US-cities. A few weeks later a grand jury decided that the police officer Darren Wilson did not have to stand trial, which sparked even more unrest. Due to the great media attention, more and more cases similar to Michael Brown were reported. In April 2015 a video emerged that depicts a white police officer in Charleston, North Carolina, fatally shooting the African-American Walter Scott who was running away from him. After that video was published, the police officer was fired and is now facing murder charges. These cases have sparked a national debate on race and law enforcement officers.

Segregation is nowadays not only present in the US justice system, but is also still prevalent in the education system, according to a 2013 article which was published in *The Guardian*. This article states that "43 % of Latinos and 38 % of blacks go to schools where less than 10 % of their peers are white." (Allen *The Guardian* April 26, 2015) These schools usually only have a very limited number

of financial resources and also their students are often affected by poverty. Furthermore, the unemployment rate for African-Americans is still higher than that for whites and black people are much more likely to live in impoverished neighborhoods.

5. A Lesson Before Dying

'I want you to chip away at that myth by standing. I want you - yes, you - to call them liars. I want you to show them that you are as much a man - more a man than they can ever be. That jury? You call them men? That judge? Is he a man? The governor is no better. They play by the rules their forefathers created hundreds of years ago. Their forefathers said that we're only three-fifths human - and they believe it to this day.' (ALBD 192)

5.1. Plot

In the fictional town Bayonne in Louisiana the black man Jefferson is accused and arrested for robbery and the murder of Alcee Gropé, a white liquor store owner. At the trial, Jefferson's defense attorney calls him "a hog" which angers and hurts his godmother Miss Emma because she raised Jefferson. The all-white jury soon finds Jefferson guilty and he is given the death penalty. The young man does not have much time left, but Miss Emma wants to make him a man before he is executed. Therefore, she asks the teacher Grant Wiggins for help, who is reluctant at first, but finally agrees to visit Jefferson in prison.

Grant Wiggins is frustrated by his job as a teacher and dreams of leaving Louisiana for good, but his girlfriend Vivian is not ready to run away. Vivian, a mulatto, is still married and in the process of getting a divorce from her husband. In addition to that, she has two children and she and Grant have to keep their relationship a secret, because Vivian fears that her husband would take away her children if he found out. Vivian is also the one who encourages Grant to continue his visits to the prison. Grant does not really know what to teach Jefferson and Jefferson does not make it easy for him because he refuses to have serious conversations and often behaves like a hog. He is depressed and angered about the wrongful conviction and has lost all hope and faith.

Grant realizes that in order to make Jefferson a man, he has to turn him into a human being again. After many visits, Grant and Jefferson's relationship grows

deeper and Jefferson starts talking to Grant, mainly about his fears. Ultimately, Jefferson is executed, but he walked to the chair as a man. Furthermore, also Grant has changed and he can finally embrace the life he already has instead of running away and leaving everything behind.

5.2. Structure and Point of View

A Lesson Before Dying is set in the fictional town of Bayonne in the 1940s, between October and Easter:

[t]his six-month period comprises the academic year for Grant, when he teaches the children from the Pichot Plantation in his one-room school along with Jefferson. Six months also suggest the half measures of institutionalized education and justice accorded African Americans. (Carmean 118)

Valerie Babb defines *A Lesson Before Dying* as a novel of " 'old-fashioned' modernism [which] is evident in [Gaines'] unconventional narrative technique and his recreation of cultural history." (Babb 251)

According to Karen Carmean, the novel can be divided into three parts told from different perspectives:

Chapters 1-28 and the concluding chapter 31, are told from Grant Wiggins's [sic] point of view. Chapter 29 is Jefferson's prison diary during the last weeks of his life. And Chapter 30 is told from several narrative perspectives by members of the community as they feel the impact of Jefferson's execution. (Carmean 119)

For Carmean, these shifts give the reader a "more comprehensive view than a single narrative angle" (Carmean 119). Furthermore, they "detail Grant's frustration as he struggles with emotional demands he would rather avoid, and they avoid stereotypical community responses on execution day." (Carmean 119)

On the other hand, Mary Ellen Doyle broadens the three parts into a five section-structure:

[c]hapters 1 through 8 introduce all significant community relationships 'as they are' at the time and in the context of Jefferson's condemnation. With the introduction of Jefferson in chapter 9, those relationships begin slowly to expand and change; incomplete but distinct alterations in him, in Grant, and in the community are achieved by chapter 19, the Christmas program. Chapters 20 through 28 hasten and achieve the

essential lessons and character changes, described [...]. Chapters 29 through 31 witness to [sic] the achievements of Jefferson, the community, and Grant; they constitute a sort of report card or 'grading' comparable to what Grant gives to Jefferson's diary. (Doyle 208)

While Doyle offers a quite convincing division of the novel, Carmean's three part division is more plausible because of the narrative shift that she underlines with her definition.

5.3. Analysis

The novel *A Lesson Before Dying* is set in Bayonne, a fictional town in Louisiana in the 1940s. It is described as follows:

Bayonne was a small town of about six thousand. Approximately three thousand five hundred whites; approximately two thousand five hundred colored. It was the parish seat for St. Raphael. The courthouse was there; so was the jail. There was a Catholic church uptown for whites; a Catholic church back of town for colored. There was a white movie theater uptown; a colored movie theater back of town. There were two elementary schools uptown; one Catholic, one public, for whites; and the same back of town for colored. Bayonne's major industries were a cement plant, a sawmill, and a slaughterhouse, mostly for hogs. There was only one main street in Bayonne, and it ran along the St. Charles River. The department stores, the bank, the two or three dentists' and doctors' and attorneys' offices, were mostly on this street, which made up less than half a dozen blocks. (*ALBD* 25)

In general, Bayonne is highly segregated. Not only are there separate churches, schools, movie theaters and restaurants for white and black people respectively, there are also other instances where the two races are divided. Another example of segregation can be found in the prison itself, where there are two different bathrooms. The bathroom for the white people is always clean and can be found inside the prison, whereas the toilet for black people is down in the basement and is always filthy and dirty. Also the prisoners themselves are divided into different sections according to their races.

5.3.1. Racial injustice in *ALBD*

In the following section I want to analyze how racial injustice is illustrated in the novel, beginning with Jefferson's trial. The young black boy Jefferson is accused of murdering a white storekeeper. According to Grant, Jefferson entered the liquor store with two other black males, Brother and Bear. They did not have any money, but nevertheless wanted something to drink. Mr. Gropé refused to give them the bottle of Apple Wine on credit, and felt threatened by the customers and therefore he pulled out his revolver. However, also Brother and Bear were in possession of firearms and as a result, a gunfight broke out

that killed all except for Jefferson, who did not even realize what was going on. He decided to take some money out of the cash register and then flee the scene, but he was captured, "and he, too, would have to die." (*ALBD* 4) The prosecution, on the other hand, has a different theory: the prosecutor claims that Jefferson went to the store with the full intention of robbing Mr. Gropé and had planned this crime with Brother and Bear. In order to avoid being identified by the storekeeper, they had to kill him. When Brother and Bear died in the shooting, he then stole the money and even "celebrated the event by drinking over their still-bleeding bodies." (*ALBD* 7) According to the prosecutor, this "proved the kind of animal he really was" (*ALBD* 6-7).

Jefferson's defense attorney dismisses the accusations of the prosecution and argues that he "was at the wrong place at the wrong time." (*ALBD* 7) Furthermore, he makes Jefferson look like an animal and fool:

'Gentlemen of the jury, look at this - this - this boy. I almost said man, but I can't say man. Oh, sure, he has reached the age of twenty-one, when we, civilized men, consider the male species has reached manhood, but would you call this - this - this a man? No, not I. I would call it a boy and a fool. A fool is not aware of right and wrong. A fool does what others tell him to do. A fool does what others tell him to do. A fool got into that automobile. A man with a modicum of intelligence would have seen that those racketeers meant no good. But not a fool. A fool got into that automobile. A fool rode to the grocery store. A fool stood by and watched this happen, not having the sense to run.' (*ALBD* 7)

In this first part of the lawyer's closing argument, he repeatedly refers to Jefferson as a "fool" and not a man. In addition to that, he calls him a "boy" instead of a man, even though he is already twenty-one years old and should be seen as an adult. At that time black men were often referred to as "boy" or only addressed by their first name. The lawyer goes on:

'Gentlemen of the jury, look at him - look at him - look at this. Do you see a man sitting here? [...] Do you see anyone here who could plan a murder, a robbery, can plan - can plan - can plan anything? A cornered animal to strike quickly out of fear, a trait inherited from his ancestors in the deepest jungle of blackest Africa - yes, yes, that he can do - but to plan? [...] What you see here is thing that acts on command. A thing to hold the handle of a plow, a thing to load your bales of cotton, a thing to dig your ditches, to chop your wood, to pull your corn. [...] Gentlemen of the jury, this man planned a robbery? Oh, pardon me, pardon me, I

surely did not mean to insult your intelligence by saying 'man' [...].' (*ALBD* 7-8)

His lawyer continues to depict Jefferson as less than human and finally actually calls him an animal from Africa, regardless of the fact that Jefferson was born in the United States and has probably never been to another continent in all his life. Not only does he insult Jefferson, but he also insults his family and relatives, from whom he inherited this animalistic behavior. In the last part of his argument, he finally defines the kind of animal Jefferson is in his opinion:

'Gentlemen of the jury, be merciful. For God's sake, be merciful. He is innocent of all charges brought against him. But let us say he was not. Let us for a moment say he was not. What justice would there be to take his life? Justice, gentlemen? Why, I would just as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this.' (*ALBD* 8)

In his closing argument, Jefferson's defense attorney not only calls him a hog, he even indirectly refers to the conception that Jefferson is indeed guilty of robbery and murder and the only reason why the jury should not convict him is that he is a hog that does not know better. Jefferson is depicted as being more than just stupid and this is what angers his godmother the most. The lawyer's strategy appeals to the prejudices of the white jury towards black people by degrading the defendant to an animalistic creature.

Grant Wiggins did not attend the trial, he "was not there, yet [he] was there." (*ALBD* 3) However, he did not have to go to the trial because he already knew what the verdict would be. Growing up in the Deep South, in Grant's case in Louisiana, and witnessing all the injustice and prejudices against black people during the time of segregation, he knows exactly how the twelve white men on the jury will decide. Grant is not the only one who can predict the outcome of the trial; also Jefferson's godmother Miss Emma "knew, as we all knew, what the outcome would be." (*ALBD* 4) After a short debate, the jury reach a verdict: guilty of robbery and murder in the first degree. A few days later, Jefferson is sentenced to death by electrocution.

Although Jefferson is indeed guilty of stealing money from Mr. Gropé, he did not know what Brother and Bear were planning that day. He was "at the wrong place at the wrong time", and he was naive, but there is not enough evidence to convict Jefferson of murder. The narrator of the story did not witness the crime and therefore the reader cannot know for sure that Jefferson did not shoot at Mr. Gropé, but there are clues that support this assumption. First of all, Mr. Gropé only shot at Brother and Bear and not at Jefferson, which is probably due to the fact that Jefferson did not pose a threat to him. The storekeeper even shot one of them twice and he probably would not have done that if Jefferson had been more than an innocent bystander. Furthermore, Jefferson has never been in serious trouble with the law before, whereas Brother and Bear were known to be up to no good. However, Jefferson is doomed from the moment he is caught at the crime scene. An all-white jury in the Deep South does not have a choice but to find him guilty because in this society, a black man is guilty until proven innocent. Furthermore, Jefferson does not have the best defense, which further seals his fate.

5.3.2. Racial discrimination in *ALBD*

The novel *A Lesson Before Dying* does not only illustrate the racial injustice of the legal system in the segregated Deep South, but it also contains many instances of racial discrimination. In this section, I will use several episodes from the novel to illustrate how all of the black characters were faced with discrimination, prejudice and intolerance.

Racial discrimination can be seen when Tante Lou and Miss Emma try to talk Grant into visiting Jefferson at the prison, talking to him and trying to turn him into a man before he is executed. Grant is a much respected member of the black community because he went to University and works at the local school for black children as a teacher. He is much more intelligent than the average black person in Bayonne and even has more intellect than many white people in their community. Grant does not want to have anything to do with this, but his aunt insists and he reluctantly agrees to drive Tante Lou and Miss Emma to Henri Pichot, who is the brother-in-law of the sheriff. They want Mr. Pichot to

talk to the sheriff for them in order to get permission to visit Jefferson. Grant is familiar with the home of the Pichot family because both his aunt and Miss Emma used to cook and clean there and Grant often visited his aunt when he was a child. When the trio arrives at the Pichot plantation and Grant parks the car near the back entrance, he asks his aunt: " 'Am I supposed to go in there too?' " (*ALBD* 17) Tante Lou has spent her whole life working very hard to provide a better future for her nephew and when he was old enough and ready to leave Bayonne to attend college, she told him that he should never have to go through that back door ever again. Black people at that time had to use a separate entrance than white people and for the proud Grant it is degrading and humiliating having to use the servants' entrance again. In the Pichot house, no one offers Miss Emma or Tante Lou, both in their seventies, a chair to sit down.

Tante Lou and Miss Emma are very careful in their choice of words, how they address Mr. Pichot, and how they ask him for a favor. They want to visit Jefferson in prison and hope that Mr. Pichot would ask his brother-in-law, Sheriff Guidry, about these visitation rights. The two women are used to feeling inferior and it is easier for them to play by the rules of segregation. On the other hand, Henri Pichot is clearly displeased with Grant when he fails to use the correct language in their conversation:

He looked over her head at me, standing back by the door. I was too educated for Henri Pichot; he had no use for me at all anymore. [...] So Henri Pichot, who cared nothing in the world for me, tolerated me because of my aunt. "And what do you plan to do?" he asked me. I shook my head. "I have no idea." He stared at me, and I realized that I had not answered him in the proper manner. "Sir," I added. [...] He was finished talking to me. Now he wanted me to look away. I lowered my eyes. (*ALBD* 21)

Black people were obliged to address white men with "Sir", whereas black people were mostly addressed by their first name or simply with "boy". Grant has a better education than the white Henri Pichot and is in this respect superior to him, but since he is black, he is still inferior to Pichot, or at least he has to pretend to be. Grant Wiggins is a proud man who often dreams of leaving Bayonne and move to a city where life is easier for educated black people, and he hates being treated as a second-class citizen by all white people. He simply

is tired of the need to be respectful towards white people, while they show him nothing but hate, suspicion, and disrespect.

Another instance of racial discrimination occurs when a man working for Henri Pichot visits Grant at school to tell him that he should be at the Pichot house at five that afternoon. The messenger, Farrell Jarreau, has been working for Pichot for years, but still he is only a yardman and Pichot did not bother telling Jarreau why Grant should go to the plantation. Furthermore, Grant arrives at Pichot's house punctually and is then left standing in the kitchen, waiting for Pichot. Grant refuses to drink coffee or eat something there because he is too proud to accept anything from the white people who disrespect him. Even though Henri Pichot and the sheriff Sam Guidry are present in the house, nobody bothers to go into the kitchen and talk to Grant, regardless of their appointment, because he is black and in their view, black people can be let waiting. The black housekeeper Inez tries to encourage Grant, but she knows that the two white men do not care how long Grant has to wait for them. Moreover, they decide to have dinner first in the dining room, which forces Grant to wait even longer and thus further humiliating him.

The sheriff's wife, Edna Guidry, finally enters the kitchen and starts asking Grant many questions. However, she never waits for a response to these questions and when she greets Grant, she gives him her hand, but she does not get too close to Grant, so that he has to lean forward to shake it. Although she does express sympathy and compassion for Jefferson and his family, her behavior shows that she is also a strong believer in the supremacy of the white race.

After more than two hours, the white men finally walk into the kitchen to speak to Grant. Grant asks himself how he "should respond to them. Whether [he] should act like the teacher that [he] was, or like the nigger that [he] was supposed to be. [...] To show too much intelligence would have been an insult to them. To show a lack of intelligence would have been a greater insult to [him]." (*ALBD* 47) When Sam Guidry asks him: " 'Been waiting long?' " (*ALBD* 47), Grant responds truthfully: " 'About two and a half hours, sir' " (*ALBD* 47),

however, he is supposed to respond with "not long". Grant refuses to behave more submissively than he has to and he does not really want to be there and is not afraid to show his displeasure.

Grant continues to break the common code when he answers a question from the sheriff as follows: " 'She *doesn't* feel that she has the strength to come up there all the time.' " [emphasis added] (*ALBD* 48) To that Guidry responds: " 'She doesn't, huh?' " (*ALBD* 48) One distinct feature of African-American Vernacular English is that present-tense verbs are uninflected even though it is grammatically inaccurate. Grant is an educated man and teacher and thus uses the correct verb to show his intelligence.

Grant is still reluctant to visit Jefferson and therefore he does not really care about the sheriff's decision to give them permission, in fact, he hopes that the sheriff will deny this request and even tells him: " 'Believe me, Mr. Guidry, if it was left up to me, I wouldn't have anything to do with it at all' " (*ALBD* 49), to which the sheriff responds: " 'You and I are in accord there [...]. But my wife thinks different. Now, which one you think is right, me or her?' " (*ALBD* 49). Guidry tries to set Grant up by asking him this intricate question just to amuse himself and the other white men, but Grant answers smartly: " 'I make it a habit never to get into family business' " (*ALBD* 49). Since Guidry hoped to embarrass Grant with this question, he is disappointed with his smart answer and responds: " 'You're smart [...]. Maybe you're just a little too smart for your own good.' " (*ALBD* 49) Reluctantly, the sheriff finally gives his permission, but reminds Grant that he should not aggravate Jefferson. Moreover, he still does not like the idea at all and he does not understand what Grant could possibly teach him that would make a difference and he refers to Jefferson as a "contented hog" (*ALBD* 49).

As already mentioned above, Grant works as a teacher at the local black school, where he has to teach six grades at the same time. He is frustrated with his job because he thinks it does not do any good. He can only teach six months every year because the students are needed in the fields from April until October. This means that the black children do not receive as much education

as their white peers do. Furthermore, the black school has considerably less money and is very ill-equipped. It is situated inside the church for the black community and there is never enough chalk and most of the schoolbooks are not in a decent condition. Grant is a strict teacher who frequently punishes his students for misbehaving during the lessons. He initially hoped to change the lives of many black people by educating them, but he quickly realized that most of his students will either be killed at a young age or end up in prison.

One day the white superintendent pays a visit to Grant's school, which is also a very good example of racial discrimination due to the superintendent's feelings of superiority over the black teacher. Grant prepared his students in advance for this visit by urging them to clean themselves thoroughly and dress neatly. When the superintendent finally arrives, he cannot remember Grant's name, although he has met him several times and calls Grant "Higgins" instead of Wiggins. During this visit, the extent of the two-class school system in the segregated South is revealed: Firstly, the superintendent Dr. Joseph Morgan visits the white schools at least two times each year, and the black schools only once. Furthermore, Dr. Joseph inspects the hands of many students and after some time he even starts inspecting the teeth. Grant comments on this as follows:

At the university I had read about slave masters who had done the same when buying new slaves, and I had read of cattlemen doing it when purchasing horses and cattle. At least Dr. Joseph had graduated to the level where he let the children spread out their own lips, rather than using some kind of crude metal instrument. I appreciated his humanitarianism. (*ALBD* 56)

Arguably, Dr. Joseph sees the black children more as objects than human beings. It can be assumed that he does not check the hands and teeth of the white students and indeed this inspection bears a resemblance to a slave master inspecting slaves. In addition to that, he gives the students a lecture on nutrition and exercise, even though he is so over-weight that he can barely get out of his car. With exercise, he means hard work like "[p]icking cotton, gathering potatoes, pulling onions, working in the garden" (*ALBD* 56). Finally, he tells Grant: "I must compliment you. You have an excellent crop of students, an excellent crop, Higgins." (*ALBD* 56) Once again, Dr. Joseph states his opinion of the black children, even though he is quite satisfied with them, he

refers to them as "crop" and by making use of this racist language he treats black people as objects. Furthermore, even at the end of the visit, Dr. Joseph fails to call Grant by his real name, however, Grant notes that he is getting closer to his real name, because he used to call him "Washington" a few years before. When Grant accompanies him to his car, he friendly and respectfully points out the lack of resources:

'I don't have all the books I need In some classes I have two children studying out of one book. And even with that, some of the pages in the book are missing. I need more paper to write on, I need more chalk for the blackboards, I need more pencils, I even need a better heater.'
(*ALBD* 57)

Dr. Joseph's only remark to this complaint is that every school, black and white, has the same problem and he thinks that this will silence Grant, but Grant responds: " 'Many of the books I have to use are hand-me-downs from the white schools [...]. And they have missing pages.' " (*ALBD* 57) However, Dr. Joseph starts to get annoyed by hearing the truth and Grant doubting him, and asks Grant: " 'Are you questioning me, Higgins?' " (*ALBD* 57). Before he drives away, he tells Grant to put more emphasis on hygiene, but Grant points out to him that most students do not have a toothbrush and their parents will not buy one for them. Dr. Joseph suggests having the children work on the fields in order to get some money, which is another example of his racism.

When the black school gets its first load of wood for the winter, Grant watches the two old black men unloading the wood. He notices how much fun they are having while performing this tasks, and later he assigns some students to chop the wood and they are enjoying themselves as well. By watching them, he remembers his own school days and how he used to chop the wood with some other boys and notes that many of them are dead or in prison by now. His elementary school teacher was Matthew Antoine, a man of mixed race, referred to as a mulatto, who despised blacks because he saw himself as superior since he had some drops of white blood in contrast to his students. Mr. Antoine had a very great impact on Grant, who visited him when he was finished with university and returned to Bayonne to teach. Mr. Antoine repeatedly told Grant that he would not change anything and Grant also got the idea of running away from his former teacher. Furthermore, when Grant sees the children laughing

and joking while chopping the wood, he wonders if things will ever change for black people since the children clearly enjoy themselves just like the old men did. He questions whether black people are destined for hard labor while white people turn to more respected professions. He wonders if black people are so used to feeling inferior and all the chains that used to hold them during the time of slavery that it is just easier for them to comply with the wishes of the whites.

Another example of discrimination is seen when Grant and Miss Emma are finally allowed to visit Jefferson in prison and every time they go there, a deputy has to thoroughly check them and everything they bring with them. During the first visit, the depth of Miss Emma's submission can be seen: Miss Emma asks one of the deputies how Jefferson is doing and he responds tartly: " 'Quiet' " (*ALBD* 69). Miss Emma believes that she is told to be quiet and submissively replies: " 'Yes, sir' " (*ALBD* 69), when in fact the deputy meant that Jefferson has been quiet. One of the deputies is Paul, a young white man, who is the friendliest of the staff and treats the blacks with as much dignity and respect as possible. He is also the one who saves Miss Emma from more humiliation when he explains the other deputy's answer to her. Paul also shows great compassion when, after their first unsuccessful visit to Jefferson, Miss Emma is frustrated and sad, Paul nods to Grant to comfort her. Furthermore, a special kind of relationship develops between Paul and Grant that could be described as the beginning of a friendship. Paul frequently asks Grant during the visits how he is doing and how his visits are going, and it seems that he genuinely means it. Moreover, he does not like searching Grant, but nevertheless, it is a duty that he has to perform, which he reluctantly does.

Miss Emma and Grant continue to visit Jefferson a few more times together, but Jefferson refuses to talk to them or eat the food they always bring with them. On the fourth visit, Grant learns that he has to go by himself because Miss Emma is very sick. However, he knows that Miss Emma is not nearly as sick as she says she is and that this is a set-up. This revelation angers Grant and initially, he refuses to go without Miss Emma. He cannot take any more humiliation from the white people and points out to Tante Lou:

'Everything you sent me to school for, you're stripping me of it [...]. The humiliation I had to go through, going into that man's kitchen. The hours I had to wait while they ate and drank and socialized before they would even see me. Now going up to that jail. To watch them put their dirty hands on that food. To search my body each time as if I'm some kind of common criminal. Maybe today they'll want to look into my mouth, or my nostrils, or make me strip. Anything to humiliate me. All the things you wanted me to escape by going to school.' (ALBD 79).

This outburst shows Grant's humiliation every time he has to interact with people from the other race because he is always treated as a second-class citizen, when in fact he feels superior to many of them due to his university degree and job. Reluctantly, Grant finally agrees to visit Jefferson by himself.

During this visit, Grant is shocked to see how Jefferson behaves. Jefferson repeatedly states that he is not a human being, but an "old hog", and although Grant tries to tell him that he is also a human being and not an animal, Jefferson goes on his knees and eats the food from the floor. The trial and the time in prison, waiting for his impending execution have clearly affected Jefferson's mind, and it seems that he truly believes he is not human anymore. Since the novel is a first-person narrative, it is unknown how Jefferson is treated by the sheriff and all the deputies when Grant is not there, but most deputies, with the exception of Paul, who is always very friendly to Jefferson, probably treat Jefferson with little respect or dignity, some of them might even treat him as an animal or monster.

After this shocking visit, Grant does not want to go home and tell his aunt and Miss Emma about Jefferson's behavior that day, instead, he decides to go to the Rainbow Club, a bar for black people. There, Grant overhears two old men talking about the famous black baseball player Jackie Robinson, who was the first African American to play in the major US league for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Robinson is more than just a hero for the average African-American; he is worshipped by many as a God, especially by blacks in the segregated South who see Robinson as the incarnation of their own dreams and ambitions. In the 1940s there were not many black sporting heroes, because most sport teams still did not accept any black people on their teams. Grant recalls another black

sporting star, the boxer Joe Louis who was one of the best boxers in the 1930s. Grant remembers a fight between Louis and the German boxer Max Schmeling where Louis lost and the whole black community was in grief for weeks. However, a few years later the two opponents fought again against each other and all the black people of Bayonne gathered around the only two available radios to listen to the fight. Hitler's Germany had already announced that the black Louis had to lose again because the white race was always the strongest and according to the Nazis, Louis' defeat in the first fight had been a clear proof for Aryan superiority. However, Louis won the next fight and the black community of Bayonne celebrated his victory as if it were their own. For a brief period of time all the black people were proud of their race and "held [their] heads higher than any people on earth had ever done for any reason." (*ALBD* 89)

Heroes like Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson can even take on the role of God for some people. Grant recalls reading a story about a boy in Florida who was about to be executed and called out for Joe Louis to help and rescue him. During the 1930s and 1940s black people did not have many black idols to look up to and they praised and worshipped the few they had. Most African-American at that time in the Deep South could only dream of a better life, but they knew very well that they would never be free of discrimination, injustice and prejudice. This is also one big reason for Grant's discontent. He went to University and tried his best, but still, it is not enough and he still has to deal with racism on a daily basis, all the while feeling that he does not change anything. Furthermore, he dreams of running away and starting a new life with his girlfriend Vivian. The two of them meet later that day and Grant tries to persuade Vivian to leave with him, but she refuses and points out to him that he had already run away once but came back because he "love[s] them [the black community of Bayonne] more than [he] hate[s] this place." (*ALBD* 94)

An important turning point for Grant occurs when one day Vivian decides to visit Grant at his home where she has never been before. The two of them decide to take a walk and end up making love in a sugarcane field. Afterwards, they talk about their future and a possible family. Grant mentions that he would like to

name his son "Paul", which is a direct reference to the deputy at the jailhouse who treats Grant with much more respect and dignity than all the other white deputies. It is an important turning point for Grant because he used to despise and hate all white people. However, he slowly starts to realize that not only Jefferson has to learn something and change, also he himself needs to transform and become a man who is free from bitterness and hatred.

Grant decides to finally introduce his girlfriend to his aunt, who is drinking coffee with her friends. At first the ladies are quite skeptical towards Vivian due to her light skin color. When Tante Lou learns that Vivian is from Free LaCove, she remarks: " 'I hear they don't like dark-skin people back there.' " (*ALBD* 114) Mulattos like Vivian and her family often had to struggle with prejudice not only from white people, but also from black people. Because of their lighter skin color, they were not accepted as members of either race and therefore their attitude towards white and black people was often not very positive. When Vivian says goodbye to the ladies, Tante Lou calls her " 'a lady of quality. Quality ain't cheap.' " (*ALBD* 116) Even though this is in a way a compliment, it also reduces Vivian to an object for sale. Furthermore, Grant tells Vivian that her family " 'is not the same thing [...]. Far from being the same thing' " (*ALBD* 115), referring to the differences between his own family and Vivian's. However, it does seem that Tante Lou and also her friends finally accept Vivian for what she is and seem quite satisfied with her due to her friendly nature.

Grant did not tell Miss Emma or his aunt how Jefferson really behaved when he visited him alone. However, the women figured out the truth when they went to see him themselves and he acted again like a hog. The two women confront Grant and he is forced to admit the truth. Moreover, he refuses to visit Jefferson again and tells them: " 'I do everything I know how to do to keep people like him from going there.' " (*ALBD* 123) It is debatable if Grant really does everything in his power to keep his students from following Jefferson's footsteps. He is a very strict and harsh teacher who controls his students by using violence and mockery, which only fosters the institutionalized racism that is already in the mind of his black students. Furthermore, he does not attempt to motivate the children or help them to overcome the harsh reality of their lives.

Even though Grant refused to visit Jefferson again, on the next Friday he finds himself back at the jailhouse. The deputy Paul is there and walks him to Jefferson's cell. Grant remarks that Paul "seemed better educated than the chief deputy or the sheriff. And I had heard from people in the quarter who knew his people that he had come from pretty good stock." (*ALBD* 125-126) Just before the two men reach Jefferson's cell, Paul suggests calling each other by their first names, another instance of Paul's unbiased and respectful attitude towards black people.

After this visit Paul tells Grant that the sheriff wants to see him and leads him to the sheriff's office. The sheriff is on the phone and continues his phone conversation while Grant has to stand and wait once more. When he finally gets off the phone, he informs Grant that Miss Emma has made another request: she now wants to see Jefferson in the dayroom of the jail, where they can all sit down and eat the food she always brings with her. Grant does not know anything about that, which the sheriff finds hard to believe, but Grant later finds out that Miss Emma, Tante Lou and Reverend Ambrose "had visited the sheriff's wife a day after they had last seen Jefferson. The sheriff's wife greeted them graciously and set a precedent by having them sit in the living room, while her maid served them coffee." (*ALBD* 133) In the segregated South, all black people usually had to sit and wait in the kitchen of white people's houses, but the sheriff's wife allowed them to sit in the living room with her, just like white visitors would, and even offered them coffee. This may be due to the fact that Mrs. Guidry feels that she owes Miss Emma something because Miss Emma used to work for the Guidry family. The sheriff asks his deputy Clark whether he should allow visits in the dayroom or not, and the deputy suggests that Jefferson should stay in his cell, but this time the sheriff does not listen to his colleague, instead, he leaves this decision up to Jefferson. This suggests a first change in the attitude of the sheriff towards his black prisoner Jefferson.

In late February Grant learns that the date for Jefferson's execution has been set and that he and Reverend Ambrose are expected at Pichot's house. Inez tells the two men that the sheriff will be there in about twenty minutes, but Grant expects to wait much longer for Guidry due to past experiences. However, this

time the sheriff is on time and Guidry and Henri Pichot want to talk to the two black men in the salon. Even though Grant has spent a lot of time in Pichot's house when he was younger, he has never been to any other room than the kitchen, and he and the Reverend are reluctant at first to go into another room. Why Henri Pichot wants to see the two men in the salon and not as usual in the kitchen is not known, but one possible explanation might be Edna Guidry's groundbreaking decision to host Miss Emma, Tante Lou and the Reverend in her living room, which causes Henri Pichot to do the same thing. However, unlike Edna Guidry, he does not offer coffee to the two black men.

At Pichot's house, Grant and Ambrose learn that the execution will take place on the second Friday after Easter, which will be April eighth, between noon and three o'clock. When questioned by Grant why the execution would take place two weeks after Good Friday, the sheriff explains:

'It had to be before or after Easter. It couldn't happen during Lent.' [...] [T]he governor had originally signed an execution order to be carried out two weeks before Ash Wednesday. But one of his aides pointed out that another execution was scheduled during that time, and because of our state's heavily Catholic population, it might not go well to have two executions just before the beginning of Lent. (*ALBD* 156)

After their conversation with Henri Pichot and the sheriff, Grant wonders how

'people come up with a date and a time to take life from another man [and] who made them God [...]. Twelve white men say a black man must die, and another white man sets the date and time without consulting one black person. Justice? [...] They sentence you to death because you were at the wrong place at the wrong time, with no proof that you had anything at all to do with the crime other than being there when it happened. Yet six months later they come and unlock your cage and tell you, We, us, white folks all, have decided it's time for you to die, because this is the convenient date and time.' (*ALBD* 157-158)

Grant is very angry about this injustice, especially that only white people have the right to decide over a man's life and death and even have the power to set a date. Moreover, he does not have the strength and courage to accompany Reverend Ambrose to Miss Emma's house to bring her the sad news.

Even though black people have to face discrimination and prejudice in Bayonne on a daily basis, the black community supports each other and helps the ones in needs. An example of this social cohesion is the day Miss Emma hears about the news of the execution date, and many black people from the community pay her a visit to show her their support, because she is devastated and has to stay in bed. Also Grant and Vivian stop by to see how Miss Emma is feeling. Afterwards, the two of them go to the Rainbow Club, where they discuss the events of the day and also Vivian's suspicion that one of Grant's students, Irene, might be in love with him. Grant does not deny this, however, he draws a comparison between Irene, his aunt and Miss Emma and points out that all of these women want something from him:

'We black men have failed to protect our women since the time of slavery. We stay here in the South and are broken, or we run away and leave them alone to look after the children and themselves. So each time a male child is born, they hope he will be the one to change this vicious circle - which he never does. Because even though he wants to change it, and maybe even tries to change it, it is too heavy a burden because of all the others who have run away and left their burdens behind. So he, too, must run away if he is to hold on to his sanity and have a life of his own.' (*ALBD* 166-167)

While Irene and Tante Lou do not want to let go of Grant and therefore are not very friendly towards Vivian, Miss Emma needs Grant to teach Jefferson how to become a man. Even though Reverend Ambrose visits Jefferson as well and tries to help him find his peace with God, Miss Emma also needs Grant because she wants " 'memories of him standing like a man' " (*ALBD* 166). Vivian does not really understand what Grant means, therefore he tries again:

'What [Miss Emma] wants is for him, Jefferson, and me to change everything that has been going on for three hundred years. She wants it to happen so in case she ever gets out of her bed again, she can go to that little church there in the quarter and say proudly, 'You see, I told you - I told you he was a man'. And if she dies an hour after that, all right; but what she wants to hear first is that he did not crawl to that white man, that he stood at that last moment and walked. Because if he does not, she knows that she will never get another chance to see a black man stand for her.' (*ALBD* 167)

Just like Irene and Tante Lou, who want to be proud of Grant, Miss Emma wants to be proud of Jefferson. The women in Bayonne do not have any real male heroes, because many have been abandoned by black men and even if their fathers, grandfathers or husbands are still around, they cannot really learn anything from them that would help them and improve their situation. Therefore, many black women look up to Grant and, as a result, he feels he has to carry a heavy load on his shoulder. For a religious woman like Miss Emma it is important that Jefferson has some spiritual guidance, but she also needs Grant to teach him how to be a man and behave like a man on the day of the execution, in order to show not only the black people of Bayonne, but also the white ones that Jefferson can accept his fate with dignity, and not crawl to the chair as some white people might expect.

When Grant visits Jefferson again, Paul is on duty. Once more, he treats Grant with a lot of respect and even though he has to search him, Grant can feel that he does not really like to do this, whereas the chief deputy seems to find nothing wrong with these strict searches. On that day, Grant can finally feel that he is making progress with Jefferson, because he starts demanding and wanting things like ice-cream and he also shows some interest in the lives of other people from the community. Grant offers to buy him a radio and decides to do it immediately so that Jefferson can listen to music over the weekend. Grant drives to a store in Bayonne where white owners sell radios among many other things. He is the only customer in the shop, but nevertheless he is ignored at first by the white saleswoman. When he finds a radio, he asks the saleswoman for a new one in a box, but she does not want to bring him another one, insisting that the one he has in his hands is new. This treatment of African Americans was very common in the segregated South and normally a black person was required to accept the offer of the store clerk to get the radio for one dollar less. However, Grant does not give in and insists to receive a brand new one in a box, because he feels that Jefferson deserves a new one. The saleswoman agrees, but she lets him wait for fifteen minutes, and when she finally returns with a new radio and Grant is ready to pay and leave the store, a white woman enters the store. As a result, the store clerk immediately turns her attention to the white person and Grant has to wait again for ten minutes, even

though the woman does not even want to buy anything and simply dropped by to chat. When Grant finally pays for the radio, he is asked if he would like a bag, but he can sense in the tone of the saleswoman that she does not really want to give him a bag. Just like most blacks in the South during the time of segregation, Grant is treated like a second-class citizen by white people, even though he is a customer and has enough money to pay for the item. However, there seems to be hope for African-Americans, because not all white people are racist and biased; there are also people like Paul who treat them with respect and dignity.

Jefferson listens to his radio all the time now, which worries Miss Emma and Reverend Ambrose, because on one of their visits, he refused to talk to them and consequently they refer to the radio as a "sin box" and want it removed. However, the sheriff suggests that they should work together with Grant. It seems that sheriff Guidry can see that Grant is making progress with Jefferson and respects him for that. Although Grant is not really thrilled about the idea of visiting Jefferson together with the Reverend, he reluctantly agrees. On their next visit, Paul is not at the prison and therefore they are searched by the unfriendly chief deputy. He also leads them to Jefferson's cell, but unlike Paul, he does not walk beside them, instead, he walks several paces ahead, completely ignoring them. Moreover, he goes to the rest room and the four black people are required to wait for several minutes. In addition to that, he starts talking to another white man and Jefferson's visitors have to wait once more. Furthermore, he gives Grant a very angry look when he fails to address the deputy with Mister. This chief deputy clearly shows a lot of disrespect towards African-Americans, because he could have led them to the cell and then made use of the bathroom. However, by making them wait for him, all the while knowing that they cannot do anything against his behavior, the deputy shows them what he really thinks of them.

A turning point for the relationship between Grant and Jefferson occurs one day close to the execution date, when Grant, Miss Emma, Tante Lou and Reverend Ambrose visit Jefferson in the dayroom. The visit does not go very well at first because Jefferson falls back into his old patterns of not eating and talking to his nannan. Grant tries to get through to Jefferson once again and walks with him, even though this is difficult to do for Jefferson because of the chains on his feet and hands. On this day, Grant acts not only as a teacher to Jefferson, but also as a friend. Many times before he tried to lecture Jefferson and showed little patience with him, but now he is able to talk to him as a teacher who educates. He even tells Jefferson that he only teaches " 'because it is the only thing that an educated black man can do in the South today ' " (*ALBD* 191) in order to show him that he is not a hero, but Jefferson can be a hero for black people if he wants to:

'You could give something to her, to me, to those children in the quarter. You could give them something that I never could. They expect it from me, but not from you. The white people out there are saying that you don't have it - that you're a hog, not a man. [...] I want you to show them the difference between what they think you are and what you can be. To them, you're nothing but another nigger - no dignity, no heart, no love for your people. You can prove them wrong.' (*ALBD* 191)

Furthermore, Grant explains the term "myth" to Jefferson in order to make him understand what racism is and what he and the community of Bayonne expect from Jefferson:

'A myth is an old lie that people believe in. White people believe that they're better than anyone else on earth - and that's a myth. The last thing they ever want is to see a black man stand, and think, and show that common humanity that is in us all. It would destroy their myth. They would no longer have justification for having made us slaves and keeping us in the condition we are in. As long as none of us stand, they're safe. [...] I don't want them to feel safe with you anymore.' (*ALBD* 192)

Moreover, he tells Jefferson that even though he is a teacher and an educated man, he is also often confronted with racism and discrimination. In addition to that, he tries to make Jefferson understand how he can change something in order to break the vicious circle:

'I want you to chip away at that myth by standing. I want you - yes, you - to call them liars. I want you to show them that you are as much a man - more a man than they can ever be. That jury? You call them men? That judge? Is he a man? The governor is no better. They play by the rules their forefathers created hundreds of years ago. Their forefathers said that we're only three-fifths human - and they believe it to this day. Sheriff Guidry does too. He calls me Professor, but he doesn't mean it. He calls Reverend Ambrose Reverend, but he doesn't respect him. When I showed him the notebook and pencil I brought you, he grinned. Do you know why? He believes it was just a waste of time and money. What can a hog do with a pencil and paper?' (*ALBD* 192)

After this quite successful visit, Grant decides to go to the Rainbow Club to meet his girlfriend Vivian. Before Vivian shows up, he overhears a conversation between two mulatto bricklayers and even though he tries to pay no attention to them, he hears the word "nigger" several times. He also hears one of them say: " 'should have been done long ago' " (*ALBD* 197), but Grant does not really understand what they are talking about. The two bricklayers are described as follows:

[...] I knew that like so many of the mulattos in this part of the state, they did bricklaying or carpentry, and possibly some housepainting. All this by contract. And all this to keep from working in the field side by side with the niggers. Since emancipation, almost a hundred years ago, they would do any kind of work they could find to keep from working side by side in the field with the niggers. They controlled most of the bricklaying business in this part of the state. Even took that kind of work from the white boys, because they would do it so much cheaper than the white boys would. Anything not to work alongside the niggers. [...] And these two who were talking now were of that way of thinking. Dumb as hell, but prejudiced as hell. They had no other place to go do their drinking - they would not dare go to any of the white clubs - so they would come here and bring their prejudiced attitude with them. (*ALBD* 198)

As already mentioned before, people of mixed-race heritage, often called mulattos, were confronted with prejudice and racism as well, however, many mulattos were also prejudiced against blacks. Vivian is also a mulatto, but she does not seem to think of herself as something better and she never shows any form of racism, in fact, she is dating a black man. The two bricklayers on the other hand, seem to hate and despise all black people. They refuse to work in the field among blacks, and many mulatto parents do not want their children in

black schools, but the white community does not really accept them and they are often treated the same way as African Americans are.

When Grant hears one of the bricklayers say: " 'Should have burned him months go [...]. That kind of sonofabitch make it hard on everybody [...]. I'd pull the switch myself, they ask me.' " (*ALBD* 198), he finally realizes that they are talking about Jefferson and it almost seems as if they wanted Grant to hear everything they say. Hearing that Jefferson should have been executed long ago angers Grant and he decides to walk over there and set them straight. A violent fight breaks out and only Claiborne is able to stop the fight by knocking Grant unconscious.

A short time before Jefferson's execution, the roles of Grant and Jefferson change and Grant becomes the student, while Jefferson takes on the role of a teacher. Grant admits to Reverend Ambrose that he is lost and does not know what he should believe in. Ambrose points out to him that even though he has received a very good education, he is not necessarily more intelligent than any of the other black members of the community. Reverend Ambrose is well aware that Grant looks down on him due to the Reverend's limited education. Grant is an agnostic rather than an atheist, and he feels superior to Ambrose, which causes a lot of tension between the two men, but Ambrose is never really intimidated by Grant's disrespectful remarks. While Grant was initially reluctant to help Jefferson, Ambrose offered his moral support without hesitation and stands by Jefferson until the end.

Grant is happy to see that Jefferson used the notebook he brought him and filled several pages of it. A distinct chapter is devoted to Jefferson's thoughts, called "Jefferson's diary", in which Jefferson becomes the narrator. Due to the fact that Jefferson did not receive a good education, the diary contains many grammatical, spelling and punctuation mistakes. The content of the diary deals mainly with how Jefferson spends his last days before the execution. He writes about all the people who came to visit him and say goodbye, and he also talks about the white people like Sheriff Guidry and Henri Pichot. Both of these white men have shown at least a little compassion towards him: With the permission

of Guidry, Pichot lent Jefferson his knife so he could sharpen his pencil himself. Furthermore, Guidry offered to leave on the light at night. He does ask Jefferson for a favor, namely that he writes kindly of him in his diary.

Chapter 30 is also distinct, because it is a third-person narration and describes the experiences and feelings of many people, black and white, on the day of the execution. It also points out the differences between the black and white people: while the execution is a black day for the African Americans, that day is merely a nuisance for most of the whites, who just want to get it over with.

The last chapter is again a first-person narration. Grant decided to not attend the execution; instead, he is at his school and orders the students to kneel and pray until the execution is over. Grant himself does not kneel with his students; he goes outside and waits for news about Jefferson's death. Paul is the one who brings him the news and he also gives him Jefferson's diary. Furthermore, he tells him that Jefferson " 'was the strongest man in that crowded room' " (*ALBD* 253). According to Paul, Jefferson's last words were: " 'Tell Nannan I walked' " (*ALBD* 254), which is evidence for Jefferson's transformation into a real man who is considerate of the feelings of others. Paul also shows Grant his admiration for him by telling him: " ' You're one great teacher' " (*ALBD* 254). In addition to that, he offers him his friendship and gives him his hand, which Grant accepts. It is very significant that Grant learns about Jefferson's death from a white person and not a black one and by accepting Paul's hand and friendship, it becomes clear that not only has Jefferson learned a lesson, but also Grant has changed and is able to let go off all the bitterness and cynicism.

6. To Kill A Mockingbird

'Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.' (TKAM 119)

6.1. Plot

Harper Lee's only published novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* describes the childhood of Jean Louise Finch, called Scout, her brother Jeremy, nicknamed Jem, and their best friend from Mississippi, Charles Backer "Dill" Harris. It is set in the fictional "tired old town" (TKAM 6) of Maycomb, Alabama, during the years 1933-1935, the time of the Great Depression. The novel is a first person narration, where the adult Scout is the narrator and looks back to the events that happened in the 1930s. Over the years she has matured enough to understand and evaluate the events that took place in Maycomb. However, most events are told from Scout's childhood perspective, and naturally, this was a quite innocent and naive one, but the adult perspective is still in the background.

Scout and Jem are raised by their father Atticus Finch and the family housekeeper Calpurnia, a black woman, who gives her best to fulfill the mother role in the children's life because their mother died when Scout was still a baby. Atticus is a lawyer and respected by most people of their hometown Maycomb. In summer 1933, Jem and Scout befriend Dill, who lives with his aunt Rachel. The three children are both fascinated by and terrified of one particular house in their neighborhood. This house belongs to Mr. Nathan Radley, whose brother Arthur "Boo" apparently never leaves the house and therefore many rumors are spread about him. The three friends make it their mission to get a glimpse of Boo, they are, however, also very afraid of him.

After summer, Scout enters school, which she does not like at all since Calpurnia has already taught her how to read and write. On the way home from school, Scout and Jem often discover little gifts in the knothole of a tree on the Radley's property, which they would then take with them. The next summer Dill returns to Maycomb and the three children then start to act out stories that involve Boo Radley until Atticus finds out about it and forces them to stop. However, the three are still fascinated by their mysterious neighbor and on Dill's last night they go over to the Radleys' garden, but Nathan Radley shoots at them.

Jem and Scout continue to find little presents in the knothole of the tree, but very soon Nathan Radley closes the hole with cement. A short time later a fire breaks out in Miss Maudie Atkinson's house, which is just across the street from the Finchs' residence. As Scout and Jem are standing outside and watch the burning house, someone puts a blanket around Scout and she later finds out that this person was the mysterious Boo.

In the meantime, Atticus has to face several problems of his own. He has the difficult task to defend a black man from Maycomb who is accused of raping the white girl Mayella Violet Ewell. Atticus' determination to help the defendant Tom Robinson angers many people in Maycomb, and also the two children are faced with hate from other children. The African-American population of Maycomb, however, is delighted with Atticus' efforts and he soon becomes a hero to many of them. Just before Robinsons' trial begins, Dill runs away from his home and is allowed to stay in Maycomb for a short time. When Robinson gets transferred into the local jail, a mob assembles to kill him, but Atticus, with the help of his children, is able to stop the angry men from doing so. Although Atticus does not want the children to be present in the courtroom, he reluctantly gives in and the three of them follow the trial from the colored balcony. At the trial Atticus does his best to defend the young black man and presents strong evidence that suggests that Mayella Ewell voluntarily kissed Robinson, but was caught by her tyrannical father Bob Ewell, who fabricated the rape story out of shame. Atticus suspects that Mayella did not receive the injuries on her face from Robinson, but rather from her own father. However, the all-white jury is not convinced and

finds Robinson guilty of rape. Later, Robinson attempts to escape from prison, but is shot and killed by a prison guard.

Although the jury believed Ewell's version of the story, Bob Ewell feels mocked by Atticus and vows revenge. Instead of taking his anger out on Atticus himself, Mr. Ewell decides to ambush Scout and Jem one night as they walk home from a Halloween pageant at their school. He attacks the two children with a knife, but Boo Radley witnesses the attack and steps in to rescue Jem and Scout. During the struggle, Jem is injured and Ewell is fatally stabbed by Boo. The sheriff does not want to prosecute Boo and insists that Ewell accidentally stabbed himself.

The novel can be classified as both a Southern gothic and a coming-of-age novel (see Johnson, *Boundaries* 40). It is divided into two parts: part one focuses on the three children and the mystery figure Boo Radley, whereas part two deals with Robinson's trial and the hostility of many white people towards blacks. At the end of the book, with Radley's appearance and rescue of the two children, the two parts are connected together. The major themes of *TKAM* are human dignity, the coexistence of good and evil, prejudice and injustice.

6.2. Autobiographical elements

Although Lee has stated numerous times that *To Kill A Mockingbird* is not an autobiography, there are several autobiographical elements in the story. For example, Lee's mother also died, although Lee was much older than Scout and Jem when that happened, and her mother's maiden name was Frances Cunningham Finch; both Cunningham and Finch are used for two of the novel's characters, Atticus Finch and Walter Cunningham. Furthermore, Lee's father was a lawyer too, and in 1919 he had to defend two black men accused of murder, and eventually lost the case, and as a result, the two defendants were executed. Compared to other Southern people, Lee's father was also more liberal, although not quite as much as Atticus Finch. Lee's brother Edwin was, just like Jem, four years older than his sister. Moreover, the Lee family also had a black housekeeper that came daily to their residence (see Shields 120-125).

In addition to that, also the character of Dill is a reference to Lee's childhood friend Truman Persons, today better known as Truman Capote, who later became a very successful author. Just like Dill, Truman spent the summers in Lee's neighborhood and the two quickly became good friends. As in the book, Lee and Truman often acted out stories together and wrote some of them on an old typewriter (see Fleming 6).

There is no consensus among researchers who inspired the character of Tom Robinson, but it seems realistic that he was inspired by several figures. First of all, when Lee was a young girl, a black man named Walter Lett was accused of raping a white woman near Lee's hometown. The newspaper of her father reported extensively on the following trial and the defendant was eventually found guilty and sentenced to death; however, the punishment was later changed to life in prison, where he soon became ill and died in 1937. Other people have speculated that the character of Tom Robinson was inspired by the infamous Scottsboro Boys' trial; however, Harper Lee disclaimed this theory (see Johnson, *Boundaries* 7-11). Patrick Chura believes that "[...] the Emmett

Trial of 1955 [...] seems unquestionably to have provided a workable model for aspects of Lee's fictional Tom Robinson trial." (Churra 1)

6.3. Analysis

6.3.1. Introduction

The epigraph of the novel features a famous quote from the English writer and essayist Charles Lamb: "Lawyers, I suppose, were children once." By using this quotation, Lee already sets the overall tone of the novel. A great deal of the story is concerned with the law and code of Maycomb and the rules that the people of Maycomb live by. Since Atticus is a lawyer, his two children and even their black housekeeper Calpurnia are very familiar with law terminology. Both Jem and Scout want to become lawyers as well. However, the children break the law from time to time, for example when they are entering the private property of the Radleys. Part One of the novel provides the reader with more examples of other Maycomb citizens who broke or bend the law every now and then. Very early in the book the Ewell family is introduced when Scout's teacher Miss Caroline Fisher sends her student Burris Ewell home to clean himself, but Burris informs the new teacher that he will not return to school for the rest of the year. The class has to tell their teacher, who was not born in Maycomb, that the Ewells children only go to school on the first day of the school year.

At the beginning of the novel the lawyer Atticus is described as having a "profound distaste for the practice of criminal law" (*TKAM* 5), although his sense for justice is much stronger than his distaste as can be seen as the plot progresses. Furthermore, Atticus shows great strength and courage when he defends the African-American Tom Robinson. As a lawyer, it is his duty to represent his client, but what bothers so many people from Maycomb is that Atticus puts his heart and soul into this trial instead of just doing his job. This distinguishes Atticus from Jefferson's lawyer in *A Lesson Before Dying*. While Jefferson's defender does not really care about the fate of his client and even compares Jefferson to a hog, Atticus does everything humanly possible to get the conviction overturned, but his vigorous efforts are in vain.

The town of Maycomb represents a quite typical town in the segregated south, in this case Alabama. The population of this fictional town is very diverse in terms of race and social status. Lee introduces the reader to a wide range of

characters that Scout, Jem and Dill encounter. In the course of the novel, the children learn, mainly from Atticus, but also from other family members and neighbors, what tolerance and acceptance means. Two of the main characters can be classified as outsiders, namely the eccentric and mysterious Boo Radley and the black man Tom Robinson. Even the young Scout recognizes the existence of these outsiders in her hometown. In addition to that, she realizes that she is at times an outsider as well, for example when she enters school, she already knows how to read and write, which her teacher does not really support. Furthermore, Dill and Jem do not want to play with her all the time because she is a girl, and when they include her, they give her boring roles in their role-plays and they often make fun of her.

6.3.2. Racial discrimination in *TKAM*

The first eight chapters of the novel focus on the mysterious Boo Radley and the games the three children are playing to make him get out of his house. Chapter 9 is a turning point because now Boo Radley more or less disappears from the story for a while and the focus is now on a court case. Atticus has to defend the black man Tom Robinson, who is accused of having raped the white girl Mayella Ewell. Many residents of Maycomb have already been introduced to the reader and most of them were described as quite friendly and positive, but as the news spreads about Atticus' new client, the mood changes. Many white people from Maycomb are outraged that their best and well-liked lawyer would defend a black man who is accused of such a despicable crime. Atticus was appointed by Judge Taylor to defend Robinson and therefore he did not have much of a choice, but Atticus is an honorable man who will not only defend his client because he has to, but because he really wants to, and this is what bothers many white people.

Scout is first confronted with racial discrimination when a boy from her class, Cecil Jacobs, announces that " 'Scout Finch's daddy defended niggers.' " (*TKAM* 99) Scout denies this accusation, but has to admit to herself that she does not really know what Cecil Jacobs actually means and asks Jem and Atticus about it. She learns from her father that he does indeed defend African-

Americans and at this point Tom Robinson is introduced. Atticus tells Scout that: " 'Scout, you aren't old enough to understand some things yet, but there's been some high talk around town to the effect that I shouldn't do much about defending this man. It's a peculiar case [...].' " (*TKAM* 100) Young Scout cannot understand why defending black people might be a problem for some white citizens since she has never been confronted with racism before and growing up in the Finches' household with the black housekeeper Calpurnia where racism has never been an issue, she does not fully see and comprehend the many challenges and problems black people have to face in the 1930s in the segregated Deep South. Atticus does not want to make a big deal about this case and is a little naive to believe that he can protect his children from mockery and prejudice.

Unlike Scout, Atticus is aware of the prejudices against black people and he knows very well that the all-white jury will probably find Tom Robinson guilty. However, he is also very similar to his daughter because neither of them can fully understand why white people see black as inferior. For Atticus, Tom Robinson's case is more or less a case as any other; it is his duty as a lawyer to defend any man or woman who comes into contact with the law. When Scout asks him why he is defending Robinson, he replies:

'[...] if I didn't I couldn't hold up my head in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again. [...] Every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one's mine, I guess. You might hear some ugly talk about it at school, but do one thing for me if you will: you just hold your head high and keep those fists down.' (*TKAM* 100-101)

A man like Atticus would never turn down a black man, even when there is almost no chance of winning the case. Furthermore, Calpurnia knows Tom Robinson and his family very well and describes them as "clean-living folks" (*TKAM* 100). Scout has never walked away from a fight, but she promises her father to stay away from any fights, however, on the next day at school, Cecil Jacobs teases her again: " 'My folks said your daddy was a disgrace an' that nigger oughta hang from the water-tank!' " (*TKAM* 102) Scout manages to walk away, but it is clearly difficult for her to do so because it hurts her a lot when

other people make fun of her well-liked and heroic father and do not show him the respect he deserves. Another interesting aspect that can be seen in Cecil Jacob's mockery is that he obviously learned from the case from his parents at home. Children of Scout's and Cecil Jacob's age usually do not have any prejudice against people of a different color; because racism is not inherited, but a learned behavior. Cecil Jacob's family must have expressed disapproval of Atticus at home and he happened to pick it up because it seems right and justified to him.

Scout is able to keep the promise she made to Atticus until Christmas time, when she and her family visit their relatives. Scout does not really like going there because she dislikes her aunt Alexandra and her grandson Francis. Francis is one year older than Scout and just like Cecil Jacobs, he mocks Scout: " 'I guess it ain't your fault if Uncle Atticus is a nigger-lover besides, but I'm here to tell you it certainly does mortify the rest of the family.' " (*TKAM* 110) It seems he received this information from his grandmother Alexandra, because he continues:

'Grandma says it's bad enough he lets you all run wild, but now he's turned out a nigger-lover we'll never be able to walk the streets of Maycomb agin. He's ruinin' the family, that's what he's doin'. [...] He's nothin' but a nigger-lover!' (*TKAM* 110)

Scout can no longer stand this disrespect to Atticus and beats Francis up until her Uncle Jack makes her stop. As a result, Jack spansks Scout and refuses to listen to her side of the story. Scout has always admired her uncle, but he does not have any children and Scout fails to tell him the real reason of her anger towards Francis. Jack eventually apologizes to Scout when he hears her side of the story and promises her that he would not tell Atticus about it since she promised Atticus to deal with all the mockery without using her fists. Uncle Jack keeps his promise, but he does ask Atticus about Tom Robinson's case and what to expect. To this, Atticus replies:

'The only thing we've got is a black man's word against the Ewells'. The evidence boils down to you did - I didn't. The jury couldn't possibly be expected to take Tom Robinson's word against the Ewells'. [...] I hope and pray I can get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most

of all, without catching Maycomb's usual disease. Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand... I just hope that Jem and Scout come to me for their answers instead of listening to the town.' (TKAM 116-117)

Scout is eavesdropping and so she can hear their conversation and although Atticus is aware of her presence he wants her to hear everything he tells Uncle Jack to make her understand that Tom Robinson is innocent, but still does not stand a chance to be acquitted from the charges by the jury. Furthermore, he wants to emphasize one more time how important it is to him that his children do not listen to other people and instead come to him if they want or need to talk. "Maycomb's usual disease" seems to be the wide presence of racism in the town of Maycomb, which was a major problem for most southern cities at that time. Atticus is more intelligent than most people in Maycomb and he knows that racism is a terrible thing and he would be very disappointed in his children if they were to turn racist as well. He has high expectations for his son and daughter and has always tried to turn them into intelligent and righteous human beings.

Atticus gives Scout and Jem air-rifles for Christmas, but Scout is disappointed that he will not teach them how to shoot. However, he does provide them with instructions and tries to persuade them that they only shoot at tin cans, but he is well aware that they will shoot at birds. Therefore, he tells them: " 'Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.' " (TKAM 119) Scout is surprised to hear her father refer to something as a sin because he has never called anything a sin before. As a result, she tells her neighbor Miss Maudie what Atticus has told her. Miss Maudie responds as follows: " 'Your father's right [...]. Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.' " (TKAM 119) The title of the novel is referred to here for the first time, and the mockingbird is an important, reoccurring symbol in the story. Northern mockingbirds are very common throughout the United States and they are the state bird of Arkansas, Florida,

Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas. Mockingbirds are known for their surpassing intelligence and their ability to mimic the sounds of other birds and even other animals like insects or amphibians. (see *Wikipedia* "Northern mockingbird" April 3, 2015) In this novel, mockingbirds are portrayed as amiable birds which deserve a different treatment than other species of birds. Atticus, for example, does not mind if the children shoot blue jays and probably other birds as well, but shooting and killing mockingbirds is an absolute taboo for both Atticus and Miss Maudie.

Although most people in Maycomb are very religious and attend church regularly, religion does not play a major part in Atticus' life and he rarely talks about God or religious teaching. Therefore, calling it a sin to kill mockingbirds has a great significance. Since mockingbirds are so innocent creatures which, according to the novel, cause no harm to humans because they do not destroy gardens or corncribs, for example, there is no reason to shoot and thus kill them, hence shooting mockingbirds is destroying innocence.

There are several characters in that book that can be referred to as innocent mockingbirds, the most obvious mockingbird in the novel is Tom Robinson, who is innocently accused and eventually charged with rape, although he has always tried to help other people, for example Mayella. Moreover, also Boo Radley can be seen as a mockingbird because many people view him as a monster and are afraid of him, despite the fact that he has never harmed anybody. Another mockingbird is Scout herself, who is often confronted with prejudice towards her. Jem and Dill often exclude her from their games because she is a girl, her teacher rebukes her because she already knows how to read in first grade, and most importantly, many of her classmates and other people in the town and even her own relatives confront her with their disapproval of her father, and she finds herself in a position where she thinks she has to justify her father's decision. In that sense, also her brother Jem can be seen as a mockingbird. The children's family name, Finch, may also be seen as a reference to innocent birds. Finches are another species of small and fragile birds and thus represent the children's vulnerability and innocence in a southern

town like Maycomb where children are often forced to grow up and lose their innocence too soon.

One of the minor characters in the book is Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, and although she appears only for a short time, she bears a great significance for the story. Mrs. Dubose is described as an old, sick, racist and angry old woman who lives close to the Finches' house. The children are afraid of her because she always yells something at them when they walk past her house. Shortly after Jem's twelfth birthday when the children are on their way to town, she screams at Scout because she does not wear a dress and predicts a future as a waitress for her. She goes on saying that: " 'Not only a Finch waiting on tables but one in the courthouse lawing for niggers! [...] Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for!' " (*TKAM* 135) This time it is Jem who can no longer take anymore of the mockery and takes revenge on Mrs. Dubose by destroying all her beloved camellia bushes in her yard. Atticus and Mrs. Dubose punish Jem by making him go to her house every day for one month and read to her. Even though Scout does not have anything to do with the little crime Jem committed, she declares her solidarity with Jem and decides to accompany him to Mrs. Dubose. Shortly after the punishment is over, Mrs. Dubose dies and Atticus informs the children that she was addicted to morphine and reading to her helped her overcome her addiction. He also gives Jem a little present from Mrs. Dubose, a single white camellia. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Dubose is an evil woman but she also has a lot of courage and bravery inside her. Atticus does not get angry when the children tell him everything Mrs. Dubose said about him defending a black man, but rather encourages the children to visit her and he also defends her, despite all the cruel things she said. He even calls her " 'the bravest person I ever knew.' " (*TKAM* 149) For Atticus, Mrs. Dubose possessed real courage and he encouraged Jem to go and read for her because, as Atticus puts it:

'[...] I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do.' (*TKAM* 149)

Atticus has the same approach to the impending trial of Robinson. He is well aware that there is almost no chance of winning the case, he is "licked before he begins". but he tries it anyway because he wants to do everything in his power to achieve justice and equality for all people, regardless of race. Jem does not appreciate the little present from Mrs. Dubose and asks: " 'Why can't she leave me alone?' " (*TKAM* 148) Jem fails to see that despite all the anger and hatred Mrs. Dubose had inside of her, she also had some positive attributes. Jem cannot yet understand that even though many people in Maycomb share the same attitude towards black people and can therefore be seen as racists, most people also have something good and positive inside them, as good and evil often coexist.

One Sunday when Atticus has to go to Montgomery, Calpurnia takes Scout and Jem to her church in the black quarter. The black people in the church are not used to having white people attend the church service and one of the black women even says to Calpurnia: " 'I wants to know why you bringin' white chillun to nigger church. [...] You ain't got no business bringin' white chillun here - they got their church, we got our'n.' " (*TKAM* 158) This statement clearly shows the effect and extent that segregation laws had on the minds of black people. They were brought up to believe that they are different and not equal to white people and have come to terms with their status in society. However, most of the other black church members are delighted to have the Finch children in their church because they have great respect for Atticus and everything he is doing for Tom Robinson and his family. For most black people in Maycomb, Atticus is a true hero, an intelligent white man who stands up for their rights and fights for justice, something most other white lawyers in the segregated South would never do. The black community in Maycomb sees Robinson's fight with the law as their own fight, a fight for equal rights and the end of all the injustice that has been inflicted upon them. The church service of that day is dedicated to Robinson and his family, and also all the money that is collected that day will go straight to Robinson's wife Helen. Helen is unable to find a job because she is confronted with racism and the crime her husband is accused of, and nobody wants to employ the wife of a rapist and therefore she is unable to feed her children.

Atticus has always tried to protect Scout's innocence by not giving her any more information than necessary. After church, Scout finally learns about the crime Robinson is accused of, although she does not really know what rape is. She does not understand why nobody wants to hire Helen, especially when she realizes that Bob Ewell is the accuser. Early on in the book Atticus had expressed his profound aversion to the Ewell family: "The Ewells had been the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations. None of them had done an honest day's work [...]. They were people, but they lived like animals." (*TKAM* 40)

At this stage of the story, the character of Calpurnia changes from a minor character in the background that was often cast in a negative light by Scout, into a more prominent character, and it becomes clear that Calpurnia serves as a bridge between the two worlds of the black and white people of Maycomb. Calpurnia is leading a double life; during the day she works at the white household of the Finch family while she spends her free time with people of her own race where she behaves differently and even talks in a different way, which Scout refers to as "nigger-talk" (*TKAM* 167). Although Calpurnia started her life as any other black person in the South did with little education and hardly any goals, she learned how to read and write from Miss Maudie's aunt and Atticus. As the story progresses, it becomes more and more obvious that Calpurnia is a very wise and courageous woman who learned to live and who accepts the differences between black and white.

In the meantime, aunt Alexandra has moved into the Finch household and tries to take over. Alexandra gives the children extensive lectures about the Finch ancestors and she tries everything in her power to get Scout to behave more like a girl. Alexandra does not really approve of Calpurnia and is shocked to hear that the children went to the black church with her. At one point she even tries to get rid of Calpurnia, but Atticus stresses Calpurnia's importance for the household and in the life of the children who lack a real mother.

In front of the courthouse Jem, Scout and Dill once encounter another citizen of Maycomb, Mr. Dolphus Raymond. Although Mr. Raymond is white, he is seen as an outsider, because he lives with a black woman and even has children with her. Moreover, he pretends to be an alcoholic by constantly walking around with a brown bag in what everybody assumes that whiskey is in there, when it is in fact just Coca-Cola, simply to give the people of Maycomb a regular reason to disapprove of him. When questioned about Mr. Raymond's children by Scout, Jem refers to the mixed children as sad because

'they don't belong anywhere. Colored folks won't have 'em because they're half white; white folks won't have 'em 'cause they're colored, so they're just in-betweens, don't belong anywhere. [...] They don't mind 'em up north.' (TKAM 215)

Racially mixed people, or mulattos as they are referred to in the novel *A Lesson Before Dying*, are also in this book seen as outsiders, who in general have no one to turn to because they do not fit into any racial group. When Dill and Scout claim that they have never seen a mulatto child in their life, Jem shows them one of Mr. Raymond's children, but for Dill and Scout they "looked all Negro" (TKAM 215). Jem argues that "you hafta know who they are" (TKAM 216) in order to determine who is a mulatto and who is black. In response to Jem's claims, Scout wonders if they could have some black ancestors as well. Jem does not believe that, although he is not sure because the ancestors of the Finch family "mighta come straight out of Ethiopia durin' the Old Testament." (TKAM 216) Knowing who the ancestors of one are is very important for every white family in the Deep South, and many attempt to trace back their ancestors as long as possible because according to Jem "around here once you have a drop of Negro blood, that makes you all black." (TKAM 216)

The courtroom is full of people when the trial of Tom Robinson begins because most people from Maycomb, both black and white, are very interested in the case and its outcome. There are hardly any people who do not go to the courthouse that day; one of the few exceptions is Miss Maudie, who thinks it is " 'morbid watching a poor devil on trial for his life.' " (TKAM 213) In general, Miss Maudie is one of the few white people in Maycomb who are not racially prejudiced and feel sorry for Tom Robinson and his family. Before the trial

commences, Scout overhears a conversation between some old white men which confuses her again. Scout has always believed that Atticus volunteered for defending Robinson. The conversation revolves around her father and one of the men claims that "the court appointed him to defend this nigger." (*TKAM* 218) Another man responds "Atticus aims to defend him. That's what I don't like about it." (*TKAM* 218) For the first time Scout realizes that it probably was not Atticus' choice to defend a black man, but it was rather something he had to do, although she does not understand why Atticus did not tell her that himself since she could have used this information when she was defending him. Judge John Taylor did indeed appoint Atticus for this case and not the more inexperienced lawyer Maxwell Green, who usually receives all the court-appointed cases. However, Atticus' understanding of moral and justice restrained him from not giving his best in his defense of the innocent black man, and this is what causes all the anger and hatred.

Since Atticus did not give his children permission to attend the trial, the three enter the courthouse very late in an attempt not to be spotted by Atticus. They end up sitting with Reverend Sykes in the colored balcony, a separate section reserved for black people, as it was common at that time in the segregated South. When the black people in the balcony see them, they give them the best seats in the front row. On the one hand, this may be an allusion to the law that forced black people to give up their seats during the time of segregation. On the other hand, the black people could also have given up their seats to the children as a sign of respect, because Atticus was like a hero for them.

After the trial, Atticus has a long conversation with his children about the legal system in their country. After that debate, Scout and Jem discuss the class system of Maycomb and agree that there are basically four different kinds of people: people like themselves, people like the Cunninghams who have to live in the woods, families like the Ewells who live by the dump, and African-Americans. The two children try to find out why all these people despise each other, given the fact that they are not that different. All of these people have a long family history, an issue aunt Alexandra in particular is very focused upon. Scout reaches the conclusion that " 'there's just one kind of folks. Folks.' "

(*TKAM* 304) Jem can relate to Scout's conclusion because he used to think like that as well, however, the trial forces him to grow up and lose all his innocence, and he makes a startling discovery about Boo Radley: he begins to " 'understand why Boo Radley's stayed shut up in the house all this time... it's because he *wants* to stay inside.' " (*TKAM* 304) Jem is beginning to realize that all the myths surrounding Boo are not true, he is just a man who cannot stand all the hate and prejudice in their town, and therefore decided to stay in his house where he does not have to face evil.

Jem has learned a valuable lesson from discussing the issue of juries and the legal system in general with Atticus. Shortly after that, also Scout discovers some intriguing new things. One day in August, Scout has to stay home, while Jem and Dill go swimming without her. As a result, Scout keeps her aunt and Calpurnia company. On that particular day, Alexandra has invited the missionary circle to the Finch house for tea and Scout puts on her nice Sunday dress for the occasion. Scout would like to help Calpurnia in the kitchen, but Alexandra encourages her to sit with the ladies. One of the missionary ladies is Mrs. Grace Merriweather, who is described as a faithful Methodist and "the most devout lady in Maycomb" (*TKAM* 308), and who discusses the impoverished tribe of the Mrunas in Africa, and her eyes "filled with tears when she considered the oppressed." (*TKAM* 308) She expresses deep concern and sympathy for that tribe in a country far away, however, she ignores the problems Helen Robinson is facing now and comments on the protests from the African-American population in the aftermath of the trial as follows: " ' [...] I tell you there's nothing more distracting than a sulky darky. Their mouths go down to here. Just ruins your day to have one of 'em in the kitchen.' " (*TKAM* 310) Although Mrs. Merriweather is a deeply religious woman who is capable of expressing sympathy and compassion towards a poor tribe that is far away, she does not feel the same for the poor blacks in her own community. Moreover, she complains about the protests and anger that is felt by many African-Americans after Robinson's "guilty" verdict. Mrs. Merriweather is not the only person who feels that way; another lady from the missionary circle, "the second most devout lady in Maycomb" (*TKAM* 311) Mrs. Farrow, expresses a similar attitude: " 'looks like we're fighting a losing battle [...]. We can educate 'em till

we're blue in the face, we can try till we drop to make Christians out of 'em, but there's no lady safe in her bed these nights.' " (*TKAM* 311) Mrs. Farrow makes generalizations about the African-American population in Maycomb and thinks that every black man could pose a real danger for white women in town. Many of the ladies from the Missionary circle think that educating and converting blacks to Christianity is necessary, but it does not stop them from attacking other people. In their minds, black people are born evil and, like the tribe in Africa, still uncivilized.

Mrs. Merriweather also indirectly attacks Atticus by saying:

'I tell you there are some good but misguided people in this town. Good, but misguided. Folks in this town who think they're doing right, I mean. Now far be it from me to say who, but some of 'em in this town thought they were doing the right thing a while back, but all they did was stir 'em up. That's all they did. Might 've looked like the right thing to do at the time [...].' (*TKAM* 311)

Mrs. Merriweather expresses her disapproval of Atticus and all the efforts undertaken by him to get Robinson acquitted. In her mind, white people should not actively help black people because this would eventually give them more power. Mrs. Merriweather is the typical Southern woman; she is very faithful and polite, but in reality, she fears the blacks and is driven by hate and prejudice. Just like many other people in the segregated Deep South, she does not want the black to gain more power and an equal status to white people, because for her black people are still inferior. When Mrs. Merriweather covertly criticizes Atticus, Miss Maudie interrupts her monologue and asks her: " 'His food doesn't stick going down, does it?' " (*TKAM* 312) This is another example of Miss Maudie's courage, honesty and tolerance. Miss Maudie has a great empathy for the black population, she knows how they are treated by most people, and the racism and discrimination they are confronted with every single day angers her. She interrupts Mrs. Merriweather with an icy comment that Atticus' food is nevertheless good enough for her to eat, referring to her hypocrisy. Mrs. Merriweather is clearly caught off guard, and does not really know how to respond to this. Scout, on the other hand, does not really know what they were talking about exactly, but she looks up to Miss Maudie and her

wit and kindness one more time. Scout is not the only one who admires Miss Maudie for her comment, also Alexandra "gave Miss Maudie a look of pure gratitude" (*TKAM* 312).

Although Miss Maudie pointed out Mrs. Merriweather's obvious hypocrisy, it does not stop Mrs. Merriweather from talking about the hypocrites up north:

'Hypocrites, [...] born hypocrites [...]. At least we don't have that sin on our shoulders down here. People up there set 'em free, but you don't see 'em settin' at the table with 'em. At least we don't have the deceit to say to 'em yes you're as good as we are but stay away from us. Down here we just say you live your way and we'll live ours. I think that woman, that Mrs. Roosevelt's lost her mind - just plain lost her mind coming down to Birmingham and tryin' to sit with 'em.' (*TKAM* 313)

Clearly, Mrs. Merriweather does not see her own hypocrisy, but nevertheless she criticizes the hypocritical people who live in the North. While black people had a better and less hostile life in the northern states, their life was not completely free of racism and discrimination. In the north they were merely tolerated, but not fully accepted and whites still preferred to not having anything to do with blacks. However, in the south where Jim Crow laws were common practice, the situation for black people was much worse and many were forced to migrate to cities in the north.² Mrs. Merriweather justifies racial segregation by claiming that it is much better to control the black population and show them their place by making up rules than to pretend that they are all equal. Furthermore, she openly criticizes the first lady of the United States at that time, Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of president Franklin D. Roosevelt, who opposed racial segregation and greatly supported the African-American population. She was responsible for initiating many anti-lynching laws. Mrs. Roosevelt visited the strictly segregated city of Birmingham in 1939 to attend the Southern Conference for Human Welfare meeting and defied the Jim Crow laws by sitting between the whites and blacks. For Mrs. Merriweather, the behavior of the first lady is unacceptable; the racist woman does not understand why any white person would want to sit with black people, and her attitude is backed up by the legislation at that time.

² From 1910-1970, six million African-American left their homes in the South and migrated to cities in the North. This occurrence is known as the Great Migration.

While the ladies of the Missionary circle are still lunching, Atticus comes home with some bad news: Tom Robinson tried to escape from prison and as a result was shot by a prison guard. He wants Calpurnia to go over to Helen's place with him to break the news to Helen. Aunt Alexandra is devastated and deeply concerned about Atticus. She claims that he has done so much for Maycomb and the people of the town are " 'perfectly willing to let him do what they're too afraid to do themselves' " (*TKAM* 316). Alexandra criticizes all the people who are too afraid of defending what is right and instead rely on Atticus to do it for them, which makes the vast majority of white people in Maycomb hypocrites. Miss Maudie points out that there are at least some white people who are not racists and who believe in equality and are not afraid to speak up:

'The handful of people in this town who say that fair play is not marked White Only; the handful of people who say a fair trial is for everybody, not just us; the handful of people with enough humility to think, when they look at a Negro, there but for the Lord's kindness am I. [...] The handful of people in this town with background, that's who they are.' (*TKAM* 316)

Although it seems at times that almost everybody in Maycomb has racist views, there are some people who think differently, and will eventually have the courage to speak out and express their beliefs. Atticus is a hero and role model for all of these people, because he is doing something that no other white person wants to do. Tom Robinson's death also seems to have an effect on Scout's and Alexandra's relationship with each other. Aunt Alexandra was initially depicted as a strict woman who is preoccupied with the family's history and how to turn Scout into a real girl. When Alexandra moves in with the children, she and Scout regularly have arguments, however, after both women learned about Robinson's death, Alexandra smiles at Scout and from now on treats her in a much friendlier way.

As Scout slowly starts to fully see and understand the extent of racism in Maycomb, she encounters another hypocrite: her teacher Miss Gates. In class they are talking about Adolf Hitler and his prejudice against Jews and how Jewish people are treated in Germany. Miss Gates expresses disgust at the treatment of Jews in Germany and states that

'We are a democracy. [...] That's the difference between America and Germany. [...] Over here we don't believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced. [...] There are no better people in the world than the Jews, and why Hitler doesn't think so is a mystery to me. [...] It's one of the most terrible stories in history.' (TKAM 328-329)

Scout is puzzled by Miss Gates' words and later asks Jem for help. At Tom Robinson's trial, Scout overheard a conversation between Miss Gates and Miss Stephanie Crawford where Miss Gates said about the blacks: " ' it's time somebody taught 'em a lesson, they were gettin' way above themselves, an' the next thing they think they can do is marry us.' " (TKAM 331) Miss Gates condemns Germany and the hate Hitler feels for Jews, yet she does not see anything wrong with her own actions and her prejudice against African-Americans. Also Scout does not understand how you can " 'hate Hitler so bad an' then turn around and be ugly about folks right home' " (TKAM 331), and she asks her brother to help her understand. Jem, however, does not want to talk about the trial ever again. The events surrounding the trial and the hard lessons he have had to learn had a deep effect on the adolescent boy and he refuses to think about this painful memory.

Rumors about the reaction of Bob Ewell to the death of Tom Robinson start to circulate and they spell trouble. According to Miss Stephanie Crawford, Bob's only comment was: "it made one down and two more to go" (TKAM 323). Bob Ewell was humiliated by Atticus at the trial and although he received some sort of fame in the aftermath of the trial and even got a job, it lasted only for a very short period of time. After a few days, Bob Ewell lost his new job and he "found himself as forgotten as Tom Robinson." (TKAM 332) As a result, he had to resume "his regular weekly appearances at the welfare office for his check and received it with no grace" (TKAM 332). All these things only raise more anger and Bob Ewell wants to get his revenge on all the people who had done him and his family wrong in his mind. There is no doubt that Bob Ewell would have taken it out on Tom Robinson as well, but due to his death this is no longer an option. Therefore, he decides to harass Robinson's wife Helen by stalking her. Helen, as the sole provider of the family, finds a job with her husband's former employer, Mr. Link Deas. Mr. Deas has already taken a stand against injustice

and discrimination during the trial when his comment got him kicked out of the court house. He "made a job for Helen. He didn't really need her, but he said he felt right bad about the way things turned out." (*TKAM* 333) It seems that Mr. Deas is one of the few people in Maycomb who think that "fair play is not marked White Only" (*TKAM* 316) and when he hires Helen, he notices that she arrives at work from the wrong direction. She confides in him that the Ewell family "chunked at her" when she passed their house and therefore she tries to avoid walking by their home. Even though Helen begs Mr. Deas to stay out of this dispute, he cannot keep out of her business because it does not seem right to him. He personally tells the Ewells to leave Helen alone, however, his well-intended effort is in vain and Mr. Ewell follows her to work the next day and Helen can hear "a soft voice behind her, crooning foul words" (*TKAM* 334), which scares the widow. It is only when Mr. Link Deas threatens Bob Ewell again, that Helen is left alone. Furthermore, also Judge Taylor is a victim of Ewell's anger since he also humiliated him at the trial. He breaks into the judge's house one day; however, Judge Taylor is at home and nothing else happens to him. According to Atticus, Bob Ewell does all these evil things because he " 'knows in his heart that very few people in Maycomb really believed his and Mayella's yarns. He thought he'd be a hero, but all he got for his pain was ... was, okay, we'll convict this Negro but get back to your dump. [...] I proved him a liar but John made him look like a fool.' " (*TKAM* 335)

All these events frighten and concern Aunt Alexandra, who worries that Bob Ewell will eventually take out his anger on Atticus, who is probably his worst enemy. However, Atticus tries to reassure his sister that " '[h]e's had his fling with about everybody now, so he ought to be satisfied. He'll settle down when the weather changes.' " (*TKAM* 335) Atticus is probably more worried than he shows, but if he is, then only about his own safety. He is aware that Bob Ewell might pose a threat to him, but it never occurs to Atticus that also his family is in danger. In this case, he fails to put himself in Bob Ewell's shoes and completely underestimates his evilness. Bob Ewell is too afraid to face Atticus directly and instead he decides to take revenge on his children at Halloween. However, Boo Radley comes to Jem and Scout's rescue and kills Bob Ewell with his own knife. Scout escapes unharmed, Jem received some minor injuries to his arm. Dr.

Reynolds is called and also Sheriff Heck Tate arrives soon. Atticus maintains that Jem is the one who stabbed Bob Ewell in self-defense, and Heck Tate has a hard time convincing him that it was in fact Boo Radley. Atticus honorable and righteous character is shown again here; he is a lawyer and permanently seeks justice, and even if he had the opportunity to cover up a "crime" his own son committed, he would not do it. Atticus does not " 'want anybody saying, 'Jem Finch... his daddy paid a mint to get him out of that.' " (*TKAM* 366) He believes in justice for everybody and wants the whole truth to come out and refuses to have his son protected from the law; however, he fails to see the real truth: that Jem is not at all responsible for Ewell's death. Heck Tate, on the other hand, knows the truth, but he does not want the truth to come out, in order to protect Boo Radley.

6.3.3. Racial injustice in *TKAM*

As the trial of Tom Robinson is impending, the talk in Maycomb gets worse and worse, and Jem and Scout are now confronted with hateful remarks wherever they go and hear things like: " 'There's his chillun [...]. They c'n go loose and rape up the countryside for all of 'em who run this county care' " (*TKAM* 180). A few days before the trial begins, Dill runs away from home and is allowed to stay in Maycomb with his aunt for a while. Therefore, Dill and Scout are now able to see each other regularly and one evening the sheriff of Maycomb, Heck Tate, pays Atticus a visit. Atticus steps outside, but Jem, Scout and Dill eavesdrop on them and can hear that Heck Tate is very concerned about the well-being of Tom Robinson who will be moved to the county jail of Maycomb the next day. Atticus does not share his concern, since "this is Maycomb" (*TKAM* 194). According to Atticus, lynch mobs or gangs do not exist in Maycomb and Atticus appears to be unconcerned about Tom Robinson's well-being as well as his own. He is a strong believer in the goodness of people and truly thinks that everybody in Maycomb is his friend. It has not fully occurred to him that his actions made some people in Maycomb very angry. The children however, especially Jem, worry about Atticus' safety. Jem overhears Atticus and Alexandra arguing as Alexandra tells him that he "was disgracin' the family" (*TKAM* 197). On the next evening, the children see Atticus driving away with his

car at an unusual late hour and therefore they know that something is wrong and decide to sneak out of the house and go to town themselves to check on Atticus. In the dark town, they can see Atticus sitting alone and reading a newspaper in front of the jailhouse and the children suspect that he is waiting for someone. Suddenly four cars approach and stop right in front of the jail. Apparently, the four men want to gain entry into the jail and Atticus has been waiting there for them in order to keep them out of it and as a result, protect Tom Robinson. When Scout witnesses the conversation she cannot take it anymore and runs to Atticus. She recognizes one of the men, Walter Cunningham's father. Scout is aware of Mr. Cunningham's own troubles with the law and casually mentions the issue of entailment to Mr. Cunningham, although she is not really sure what entailment actually means. She manages to engage Mr. Cunningham in a very friendly and polite conversation and thus makes him ashamed of his actions and behavior. Mr. Cunningham as well as all the other men in that lynch mob consumed too much alcohol and that triggered their already existing racism and hate for black people, and together they formed a group that was driven by evil. However, by shaming one member of that mob, Scout is able to make him human again and let the goodness in him and all the other men take over again.

The father of the "victim" is Robert E. Lee Ewell. He is described as a very mean and hateful man; in fact the whole Ewell family is portrayed in a negative light:

[P]eople like the Ewells lived as guests of the county in prosperity as well as in the depths of a depression. No truant officers could keep their numerous offspring in school; no public health officer could free them from congenital defects, various worms, and the diseases indigenous to filthy surroundings. (*TKAM* 227)

Whereas General Robert E. Lee is the impersonation of the idealized South, Bob Ewell is the opposite: he is prejudiced, hateful and evil. Everybody in Maycomb despises the Ewells and nobody wants to have anything to do with any of them. However, the irony is that it does not really matter who is accusing a black person of a crime, as long as the accuser belongs to the white race, the defendant is guilty as charged. In the racist town Maycomb every white person

has the power to destroy an innocent man's life, even if this person belongs to a family like the Ewells.

Whereas the prosecution called several witnesses, the defense only has one: Thomas Robinson. As soon as Robinson takes the witness stand, Atticus begins questioning him about one occasion where he got into trouble with the law in order to show the jury that Tom Robinson is not an evil man. Robinson once received thirty days in prison for "disorderly conduct", and since he did not have the money to pay the fine, he had to serve time. In the witness stand, Robinson claims that he has never touched Mayella and only wanted to help her out and treat her in a friendly and respectful way. When the prosecutor Mr. Gilmer cross-examines Robinson, he asks him why he wanted to help Mayella out in the first place. Robinson responds: "I felt right sorry for her, she seemed to try more'n the rest of 'em" (*TKAM* 264). Mr. Gilmer is outraged by this claim and asks him: "*You* felt sorry for *her*, you felt *sorry* for her?" (*TKAM* 264) Mr. Gilmer puts special emphasis on the words "you" and "her", hinting at the fact that Robinson is black and Mayella white and black people must not feel sorry or pity white people under any circumstances, since usually it is the other way around. Moreover, none of the white people attending the trial was pleased with Robinson's answer since it threatened their beliefs and values.

On the other hand, Robinson and Atticus also receive some well-intended help from an unsuspected source: Robinson's former employer, Link Deas, has followed closely the trial and when Robinson gives his account of that day, Link Deas rises up from his seat and claims: " 'I just want the whole lot of you to know one thing right now. That boy's worked for me eight years an' I ain't had a speck o' trouble outa him. Not a speck.' " (*TKAM* 261) However, Judge Taylor does not tolerate any misdemeanor in his courtroom and tells him to "shut up" and sends him out of the courtroom.

The two lawyers Atticus and Horace Gilmer are quite different in their performance as lawyers. Atticus is always the perfect Southern gentleman and makes no difference in the treatment of his own witnesses and the witnesses of the prosecution. For instance, he calls Mayella "Miss" and "Ma'am", which leads

Mayella to believe that he is mocking her because she is not used to be treated with respect. Horace Gilmer, on the other hand, does not try very hard to hide his prejudice. On several occasions, he calls Tom Robinson "boy" and whenever Robinson answers one of his questions, he turns and looks at the jury to point out that Robinson is clearly lying. Although Atticus treats Mayella and also Mr. Ewell with a lot of respect during his cross-examination, there is no doubt about his overall opinion of the Ewell family. Atticus wants to get Robinson acquitted by accusing Mayella of lusting after a black man and Mr. Ewell of incest. Malcolm Gladwell sees the character of Atticus Finch as a "good Jim Crow liberal" (64) and further states that Atticus "does what lawyers for black men did in those days. He encourages [the jury] to swap one of their prejudices for another." (64)

Jem is fascinated by the course of the trial and especially by all the evidence his father provides and his clever examination of the witnesses. Therefore, he is sure that Atticus will win this case because in his innocent mind, the jury cannot make any other decision than to acquit Robinson of all the charges. Furthermore, Atticus has prepared a very compelling closing argument:

'[...] This case is not a difficult one [...]. To begin with, this case should never have come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white. [...] The defendant is not guilty, but somebody in this courtroom is. [...] [Mayella] is the victim of cruel poverty and ignorance, but I cannot pity her: she is white. [...] And so a quiet, respectable, humble Negro who had the unmitigated temerity to 'feel sorry' for a white woman has had to put his word against two white people's. [...] [Bob and Mayella Ewell] have presented themselves to you gentlemen, to this court, in the cynical confidence that their testimony would not be doubted, confident that you gentlemen would go along with them on the assumption - the evil assumption - that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are basically immoral beings, that *all* Negroes are not to be trusted around our women [...].'
(TKAM 271-273)

In his closing argument, Atticus attacks the jury, the racist residents of Maycomb and the whole legal system itself. Robinson should have never been arrested and charged with rape. Atticus implies that everything would have been different if Robinson were white. He severely criticizes Bob and Mayella Ewell for their decision to blame a black man for something he has never done when in fact Mayella broke the code of Maycomb when she lusted after a black

man. The Ewell family does not seem to feel any form of compassion towards Robinson because for them he is only a "Negro" and therefore not a human being. They are well aware that Robinson will probably be sentenced to death and eventually executed for a crime he never committed, but for the Ewells this is a small price to pay for their shame. One cannot help but wonder how things might have gone if Robinson was a white man, but in that case, most people would not have believed the accusations since the Ewells are known to be "trash": However, when a white man's word is against a black man's word than a jury will quickly determine that the black person is lying and find him guilty.

Atticus continues his closing argument by stating:

'You know the truth, and the truth is this: some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women - black or white. But this is a truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. There is not a person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman without desire.' (*TKAM* 273)

Atticus addresses the jury directly and also all the other white people in the courtroom. Everybody tells a lie every now and then and many people break the law. Quite a few people in Maycomb have broken the law at least once: Mr. Cunningham, for example, was charged with entailment, Boo Radley and his friends were once arrested for their loud behavior, and last but not least, Bob Ewell breaks the law constantly by hunting out of season.

At the end of the closing argument, Atticus talks to the jury and all the spectators with confidence and dignity and praises the juridical system of the United States:

'Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal [...]. We know all men are not created equal in the sense some people would have us believe - some people are smarter than others, some people have more opportunity [...]. But there is one way in this country in which all men are created equal - there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller [...]. That institution, gentlemen, is a court. [...] Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levelers, and in our courts all men

are created equal. [...] Gentlemen, a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up. [...] In the name of God, do your duty.' (TKAM 273-275)

Thomas Jefferson wrote the original draft of the Declaration of Independence and in it he claimed that "all men are created equal" (*The Charters of Freedom* "Declaration of Independence" April 7, 2015). However, what Jefferson really meant was that all free men are created equal, since Jefferson himself was a slave owner and never released his slaves. Also Atticus is aware of the fact that not all men are created equal and some people have better opportunities than others, but he is a great believer in the legal system of the United States, although he realizes that it contains some faults. However, he still has some hope that the jury will come to the conclusion that Robinson is innocent, which is the only conclusion that one can make after hearing all the evidence and testimony of the witnesses. On the other hand, Atticus also knows that he was "licked" before the trial even began.

Another character who has not lost hope yet is Jem. Jem wants to believe in justice, and attending the trial has a great impact on him. For the first time he could see his father in action and watching the way he deals with the witnesses, both his own witnesses and the witnesses of the prosecution, which makes him very proud of Atticus. When the jury debates the verdict, Jem is absolutely sure that the defense will win the case, claiming excitedly: " 'We've won, haven't we?' " (TKAM 276) Jem wants to stay at the courthouse until the jury comes back, but Atticus urges him to go home and eat dinner with Calpurnia, however, he " 'expect[s] it'll be over before [Jem] get[s] back.' " (TKAM 277) Jem thinks Atticus refers to the fact that it must be obvious for every halfway decent human being that Robinson is innocent and therefore needs to be acquitted of all charges brought against him: " 'You think they'll acquit him that fast?' " (TKAM 277), he asks his father. Atticus, however, does not share Jem's belief, because as an experienced lawyer he knows that an all-white jury usually does not take very long to sentence a black defendant. Also Reverend Sykes knows the sad truth and tries to abate Jem's hope when Jem tells him not to worry about the verdict since Atticus has definitely won, telling him: " 'Now, don't you be so

confident, Mr. Jem, I ain't ever seen any jury decide in favor of a colored man over a white man' " (*TKAM* 279).

When the jury finally returns to the courtroom with their verdict, Scout recalls something her father told her: " 'A jury never looks at a defendant it has convicted' " (*TKAM* 282), as she observes that not one member of the jury even glances at Robinson, and it is this moment where she realizes what the verdict will be. Jem is even more taken aback as he hears the verdict, "his shoulders jerked as if each 'guilty' was a separate stab between them." (*TKAM* 282) However, even though the verdict is not something the black community of Maycomb approved of, as a sign of respect for Atticus they all arise from their seats when Atticus leaves the courtroom to show him their support and respect.

Jem has a very hard time dealing with the outcome of the trial, repeatedly asking Atticus how the jury could convict an innocent man and commenting on the injustice of the law. Alexandra does not approve of Atticus' decision to let the children follow the trial in the first place, but Atticus simply responds to her: " 'This is their home, sister. [...] We've made it this way for them, they might as well learn to cope with it. [...] It's just as much Maycomb County as missionary teas.' " (*TKAM* 285) Atticus has lived in Maycomb County all his life and therefore he is well aware of the underlying racism and injustice of this segregated Southern county, and he wants his children to grow up seeing and understanding all that bigotry in order to contribute to a change. One can only change something he or she is aware of, and he wants Scout and Jem to see that evil does exist, but they should also appreciate the goodness of many people. Although Scout is outraged by the verdict as well, she still knows that there are also many positive things in life, and she continues to be an optimist, similar to Atticus. Jem, on the other hand, is crushed by the jury's decision, and in a way he can be described as a mockingbird as well, because although he is not literally killed, the innocence of his childhood and his youthful idealism have been taken away from him. Atticus does not want to whitewash the facts and simply answers Jem's question as to how the jury could reach that verdict as follows: " 'I don't know, but they did. They've done it before and they did it tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it - seems that only children

weep.' " (*TKAM* 285) Atticus knows that this case has not really changed anything on a larger scale, but his dedication to Robinson and his defense was a big step in the right direction, and the black community of Maycomb greatly appreciates his efforts and shows Atticus and the whole Finch family their gratitude by sending over masses of food. In a racist town like Maycomb, not many white people have stood up and fought for justice for the African-American population, and for the black people in Maycomb, Atticus is a true hero, even though his efforts were in vain.

Not only the black community has great regard for Atticus, also some of the white people are proud of Atticus, for example Miss Maudie. Miss Maudie has never made any racist remarks or comments, and has always felt compassion towards the black people. The day after the trial she bakes a cake for the children and tells Jem not to worry, " '[t]hings are never as bad as they seem.' " (*TKAM* 288) Furthermore, in an attempt to cheer Jem up, she says to Jem: " 'I simply want to tell you that there are some men in this world who were born to do our unpleasant jobs for us. Your father's one of them.' " (*TKAM* 288) The conversation with Miss Maudie seems to help Jem in coming to terms with the injustice that has been done. He slowly starts to see things from a more neutral standpoint when he states: " 'It's like being a caterpillar in a cocoon [...]. Like somethin' asleep wrapped up in a warm place. I always thought Maycomb folks were the best folks in the world, least that's what they seemed like.' " (*TKAM* 288) Jem was unaware of all the injustice that is going on in the world before the trial; like a caterpillar in a cocoon, he was protected and shielded from the outside world. However, the trial and its aftermath shook him awake and forced him to see things in a different way, thus changing his view on his hometown, the only place in the world he truly knows, and many residents of this town. Nevertheless, Miss Maudie does not want Jem to turn into a cynical and pessimistic young adult and she tries to uplift him by saying: " 'We're the safest folks in the world [...]. We're so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we've got men like Atticus to go for us.' " (*TKAM* 288) Miss Maudie wants to tell Jem that there are many decent and tolerant people in Maycomb and that even though Atticus is not a man who attends religious service regularly, he has certain Christian values and is willing to stand up for what he believes in.

Furthermore, Atticus is not the only one who has shown integrity and human kindness towards black people; people like Heck Tate and Judge Taylor, for example, also showed Christianity. Judge Taylor did not accidentally assign Atticus as a defense attorney to Robinson, but wanted Atticus as his lawyer because he knew that he was the only man in that county who had at least a very slim chance of winning the case. Although Atticus did not win in the end, he is " 'the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that.' " (*TKAM* 289) For Miss Maudie, it was a big step in the right direction and her wisdom allows her to see that although it was "just a baby-step" (*TKAM* 289), many more little steps will follow eventually and will ultimately lead to a slow change in the behavior of white people in the South.

The day after the trial is not only a difficult day for Jem, but also Atticus has a quite unpleasant encounter with Bob Ewell, who "approached him, cursed him, spat on him, and threatened to kill him" (*TKAM* 291). Atticus always tries to put himself into other people's shoes and this is also something he tries to teach his children, but he completely underestimates Bob Ewell's wickedness and depth of anger. He assumes that this was a onetime occurrence triggered by Bob Ewell's humiliation in court the day before. However, Scout and Jem and even aunt Alexandra fear that Bob Ewell could seriously hurt Atticus, and the children try to persuade him into buying or borrowing a gun for his own protection which Atticus declines and refers to that idea as "nonsense" (*TKAM* 292). Atticus does not see the need to get a gun since he does not feel that he is in any sort of immediate danger.

Meanwhile, Tom Robinson is incarcerated at Enfield Prison Farm and awaiting his conviction. Atticus tries to reassure his children that " 'nothing would happen to Tom Robinson until the higher court reviewed his case, and that Tom had a good chance of going free, or at least of having a new trial' " (*TKAM* 293), because as children of a lawyer, Scout and Jem know that rape is a capital offense in Alabama and they fear that Tom Robinson might be sentenced to death on the electric chair. The governor of Alabama has the power to commute his sentence then, but Atticus suspects that it would not even go so far. Jem gets into an argument with his father about the death penalty in Alabama; Jem

thinks that " 'the jury didn't have to give him death - if they wanted to they could've gave him twenty years' " (*TKAM* 294), but Atticus replies that " 'Tom Robinson's a colored man [...]. No jury in this part of the world's going to say, 'We think you're guilty, but not very,' on a charge like that. It was either a straight acquittal or nothing.' " (*TKAM* 294) What Atticus tries to tell his son is that every jury in the Deep South would opt for the death penalty for a black man if they had the chance to do so. Furthermore, at that time there were many more capital offenses in Alabama, whereas nowadays only murder is a capital offense. Whereas a white man has a good chance of getting away with twenty years in prison or might even be acquitted of all charges due to lack of evidence, a black defendant does not have this hope. Jem argues that " 'maybe rape shouldn't be a capital offense' " (*TKAM* 294), but Atticus refuses to start a discussion about the rape statute in general, since he is not an opponent of capital punishment per se. Furthermore, Jem questions the integrity of a grand jury since a jury can make a fatal mistake, as it was the case in the Robinson trial, whereas Atticus argues:

'If you had been on that jury, son, and eleven other boys like you, Tom would be a free man [...]. So far nothing in your life has interfered with your reasoning process. Those are twelve reasonable men in everyday life, Tom's jury, but you saw something come between them and reason. You saw the same thing that night in front of the jail. When that crew went away, they didn't go as reasonable men, they went because we were there. There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads - they couldn't be fair if they tried. In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life.' " (*TKAM* 295)

Jem still hangs on to the idea that reason has power, but Atticus has less faith in that because life has taught him better. Atticus compares the men of the jury to the mob that wanted to lynch Robinson before the trial began. Someone could be a perfectly reasonable and kind human being, but still has racism and hate of black people inside him or her and when given the power to decide over the fate of an African-American, a white person from the rural South at that time is very likely to put all reasoning aside and let hate and anger take over. Atticus knows about Jem's ambitions to become a lawyer one day and therefore he wants his son to realize that there is no justice for black people in the legal

system. Although Atticus does not necessarily disagree with the overall concept of grand juries, he does feel the need to take some of the power away from them, for example by letting a judge decide over the ultimate sentence rather than a jury consisting of twelve prejudiced men, however there is still a big possibility that also the judge is prejudiced and therefore cannot make a fair decision.

Atticus has an idealistic view of the law: " '[t]he one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom, be he any color of the rainbow, but people have a way of carrying their resentments right into a jury box.' " (*TKAM* 295) In a perfect world, the members of a jury would always judge a defendant based on the evidence that was presented to them during the trial by the lawyers, regardless of the accused person's race, but this world did not exist in the 1930's in segregated Alabama, and to a lesser degree it does not exist today. People cannot just let go of their prejudice and resentment vis-à-vis other human beings they consider inferior, and when obliged to serve on a jury, racist white men often abuse their power and make justice almost impossible. It does not even matter if there are a few people in that jury that refuse to be driven by prejudice and racism because in the United States a jury must be unanimous in their decision, and therefore an undecided individual often feels pressured and agrees with the decision of the majority.

Atticus also points out to Jem that even though there might be some black people that commit crimes, many white people do the same:

'[a]s you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but [...] whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash.' " (*TKAM* 295).

Atticus wants to make it clear to his son that white people are in no way superior to black people. Furthermore, he even goes as far as to call the whites who cause harm to blacks "trash" because African-Americans already have to deal with many disadvantages and unequal opportunities and therefore it is just cruel to cause any more harm to them. Moreover, a white man cheating a black

person has a good chance of not being prosecuted for his misdemeanor since most judges would believe whatever the white person would tell him.

Jem seems to take everything in his father tells him, but one more thing is not entirely clear to him: " 'why don't people like us and Miss Maudie ever sit on juries?' " (*TKAM* 296). Jem does not understand why juries seem to be made up of the same people over and over again. Although he has realized by now that there are numerous racist people in Maycomb, he knows many others who do not have any prejudice against African-Americans, like their neighbor Miss Maudie, or Mr. Raymond. Both Scout and Jem are baffled by the fact that women are not allowed to serve on a jury and are therefore also discriminated against. Atticus further reveals that many of the people they know get excused by Judge Taylor because they do not want to get in the middle of a legal battle and as a result lose some customers. In addition to that, Atticus explains to his children that " '[s]erving on a jury forces a man to make up his mind and declare himself about something.' " (*TKAM* 297) Jem points out that Tom Robinson's jury however, only took a few hours to reach a decision and he therefore concludes that they did not really take their time thinking about the verdict. Jem is not aware that in this case the jury actually took an unusually long time to reach a decision. In most cases where the defendant is black, a jury makes up its mind in a much shorter period of time. For Atticus, this was the "shadow of a beginning" (*TKAM* 297). It gives him at least some glimpse of hope that justice is not impossible to achieve in the South. Atticus reveals to them that there was one member in the jury who wanted to acquit Robinson at the beginning of the deliberation, namely a relative of the Cunningham family, which is quite ironic given the fact that it was Walter Cunningham Sr. who participated in the mob, and who only went home because of Scout's courage and initiative that night. In Atticus' view, they have actually won the trial, even though Robinson was found guilty eventually. Furthermore, Atticus lets them know that he put one of the Cunninghams on the jury on purpose because he had a feeling that this family is "tooth and nail" (*TKAM* 298) for you, once you gained their trust and appreciation and his hope was not in vain. Selecting a Cunningham for the jury was not very risky because no matter who was on the jury, the verdict would stay the same, but with this one jury member the process of reaching this

verdict was considerably prolonged, which was a small but very important victory.

After news of the death of Tom Robinson starts to arrive, the town of Maycomb is interested in it only for two days. The following excerpt clearly shows the overall attitude of Maycomb:

To Maycomb, Tom's death was typical. Typical of a nigger to cut and run. Typical of a nigger's mentality to have no plan, no thought for the future, just run blind first chance he saw. Funny thing, Atticus Finch might 've got him off scot free, but wait - ? Hell no. You know how they are. Easy come, easy go. Just shows you that Robinson boy was legally married, they say he kept himself clean, went to church and all that, but when it comes down to the line the veneer's mighty thin. Nigger always comes out in 'em. (TKAM 322)

In general, the white citizens of Maycomb have no sympathy or compassion for Tom's wife and act not surprised when they hear of his death because it is "typical" for blacks. This incident gives them another justification for their racism, namely that black people are always evil and not to be trusted, even if they look "clean". Nobody really asks about Tom's reason to escape or is interested in hearing it. The main reason for the prisoner's attempt to flee probably lies in his despair and the hopeless situation he found himself in. Although Atticus tried to reassure him that he will do everything he can to get him free, he could not make any promises to him. As Atticus puts it: " 'I guess Tom was tired of white men's chances and preferred to take his own.' " (TKAM 315)

The owner of the town's newspaper *The Maycomb Tribune*, Mr. B. B. Underwood, devotes a whole editorial to Tom. Although Mr. Underwood is not completely free of racism, " '[h]e despises Negroes, won't have one near him' " (TKAM 209), he has a very strong sense for justice. This already became obvious when Mr. Underwood protects Atticus from the lynch mob watching from his window with a gun, ready to shoot any time. In his editorial,

Mr. Underwood didn't talk about miscarriages of justice, he was writing so children could understand. Mr Underwood simply figured it was a sin to kill cripples, be they standing, sitting, or escaping. He likened Tom's

death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children [...]. (*TKAM* 323)

With this humane editorial, Mr. Underwood expresses his anger about the injustice that has been done. Although Tom Robinson did indeed try to escape, which was not the smartest move, he should not have been in prison at all. He compares Tom's death to the "slaughter of songbirds", and even though he does not mention mockingbirds in particular, his allusion is similar to Atticus' view that "it is a sin to kill a mockingbird". Furthermore, his editorial may be a good sign that Mr. Underwood's attitude towards black is changing.

Also Scout wonders about Mr. Underwood's choice of words and recalls the trial:

Tom had been given due process of law to the day of his death; he had been tried openly and convicted by twelve good men and true; my father had fought for him all the way. [...] Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret court of men's hearts, Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed. (*TKAM* 323)

While Jem has already realized that Tom did not have a chance for a fair trial, Scout only discovers the truth when she reads the bitter editorial. She finally understands that her father is not powerful enough to destroy all the racism and injustice in Maycomb and the word of a white person will always count more than the word of a black person. In the segregated South, a black man was guilty until proven innocent, which hardly ever happened.

7. Conclusion

My objective in this paper was to outline how racial discrimination and injustice are represented in the two novels *A Lesson Before Dying* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Both of these novels depict the situation and problems of blacks in the Deep South during the time of segregation. Racial injustice in the courtroom and racial discrimination in other contexts is presented in *A Lesson Before Dying* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The two black characters Jefferson and Tom Robinson are confronted with racism, prejudice and injustice and find themselves in a hopeless situation. While Tom Robinson has an excellent lawyer who tries everything possible to get him free, Jefferson's attorney is quite the opposite. He sees his job as a duty and not as a lifelong vocation to seek justice for everybody, regardless of race. The faith of the two defendants, however, is very similar: both of these men are found guilty by an all-white jury. Jefferson is eventually executed on the electric chair, while Tom Robinson tries to escape and is shot.

Both of these novels use first-person narration. In *A Lesson Before Dying* the black teacher Grant is the narrator, while in *To Kill A Mockingbird* the young girl Scout narrates the story. Grant is a very cynical and pessimistic character which becomes evident in the way he tells the story. Scout on the other hand is a very positive and optimistic character who never loses hope. Even though she is very young, she learns to understand that good and evil can coexist together and most people are not only good or bad.

The two writers of the novels, Ernest Gaines and Lee Harper, were both born in the southern United States. While Gaines is black and a native of Louisiana, Lee is a white writer from Alabama. Even though more than thirty years lie in between the publication of the two novels - *To Kill A Mockingbird* was published in 1960 and *A Lesson Before Dying* in 1993, the themes and topics are very similar and both stories are set during the time of segregation.

Since both novels share the common theme of racism and injustice, the problems of the African-American population of the Deep South are presented

in various ways. There are many instances where black people were treated in a disrespectful way by white people and both books show how blacks had to behave. Even though there are many white characters in both books who are driven by racism and hate, there are also some white characters who sympathize with the black people. In *A Lesson Before Dying* one of these "white heroes" is the deputy Paul and in *To Kill A Mockingbird* there are several white people who offer compassion and help to African-Americans and who are not afraid to stand up for their rights.

Last but not least, although the two novels deal with a very negative topic, the overall atmosphere and the message is quite positive: there is hope for a better future and there are people who are free of racism and prejudice.

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Abstract

This diploma thesis deals with the novels *A Lesson Before Dying* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*, by Ernest Gaines and Harper Lee respectively, and analyses how racial discrimination and injustice is represented in both of these works of two writers from the American South. Both novels are about African-Americans during the time of segregation who are accused of committing a crime against a white person and who now have to stand trial. The juries consist of only white men who are all prejudiced and eventually the two blacks are found guilty.

The first part of this diploma thesis focuses on the history of African-Americans and the Southern United States. It mainly deals with the oppression blacks had to face before and after the Civil War and explains the installation of the Jim Crow laws in the South that deeply affected the life of black people.

The second part provides an analysis of the two novels mentioned above and illustrates the prejudices black people had to deal with in the South. Racial discrimination and injustice are an essential element of both these texts and serve as a frame for the plots. Even though the two books deal with a rather sad topic, the overall message is a positive one.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit befasst sich mit den beiden Romanen *A Lesson Before Dying* und *To Kill A Mockingbird*, und untersucht, wie Diskriminierung, Rassismus und Unrecht in den beiden Werken dargestellt werden. Im ersten Teil wird die Geschichte der Afroamerikaner präsentiert, wobei vor allem auf Sklaverei in den USA, das Civil Rights Movement und Rassismus und Diskriminierung in Amerika im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert näher eingegangen wird. Da die beiden Autoren Ernest Gaines und Harper Lee aus den Südstaaten der USA stammen und die beiden südlichen Bundesstaaten Louisiana und Alabama den Schauplatz für die Romane bilden, wird auch auf die Geschichte der Südstaaten näher eingegangen. Beide Werke spielen vor dem Civil Rights Movement, in einer Zeit wo es noch eine strikte Rassentrennung im tiefen Süden gab, und die Probleme und Nöte der afroamerikanischen Bevölkerung in diesem Teil der USA wird so offensichtlich.

Beide Romane handeln von zwei Schwarzen, die zu Unrecht einer kriminellen Tat gegen Weiße beschuldigt werden und schlussendlich durch weiße Geschworene schuldig befunden werden. In *A Lesson Before Dying*, wird dem Angeklagten Jefferson vorgeworfen, einen weißen Ladeninhaber ausgeraubt und ermordet zu haben und er wird daher zum Tode verurteilt. Dieses Urteil wird später auch vollstreckt. Der schwarze Angeklagte Tom Robinson in *To Kill A Mockingbird* wird beschuldigt, sich an einer weißen Frau vergangen zu haben und ebenfalls für schuldig befunden. Er versucht später aus dem Gefängnis zu fliehen, wird dabei aber von einem Wachen erschossen. Während Robinson einen ausgezeichneten Anwalt hat, der sich sehr für seinen Klienten einsetzt und dabei selbst auf große Abneigung und Diskriminierung von Seiten der Weißen stößt, bezeichnet Jefferson's Anwalt seinen Mandanten als "Schwein".

Rassismus, besonders im Justizsystem, ist ein zentrales Thema beider Werke. Beide Männer sind in den Köpfen der Weißen schon vor Beginn der Verhandlung schuldig und da zur Zeit der Segregation in den Südstaaten nur weiße Männer als Geschworene fungieren konnten, hatten sie keine Chance auf einen Freispruch oder eine mildere Strafe. Die beiden Romane machen

auch deutlich, mit welchen Vorurteilen Schwarze im Tiefen Süden zu kämpfen hatten, sei es vor Gericht, aber auch im alltäglichen Leben und Umgang mit Weißen. Allerdings gibt es in beiden Werken auch weiße Menschen, die frei von Intoleranz und Rassismus sind, vor allem in *To Kill A Mockingbird* finden sich einige Weiße, die sich für Gerechtigkeit einsetzen.

Curriculum Vitae

Persönliche Daten

Name: Victoria Knopf
Geburtsdatum: 27.12.1988
Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

Ausbildung

2009-dato Universität Wien: Lehramtstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik und Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung

2009: Reifeprüfung mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg bestanden

2007-2009: Aufbaulehrgang für Wirtschaft (Sta Christiana Frohsdorf)

2004-2007: Hotelfachschule Oberwart

2000-2004: Hauptschule Stegersbach (bilinguale Klasse)

1996-2000: Volksschule Stegersbach

Beruflicher Werdegang

2014-dato Sondervertragslehrerin für Englisch am BORG Hegelgasse 12, 1010 Wien

2012-2009 Nachhilfelehrerin bei Schülerhilfe für Englisch und Französisch

Wien, Mai 2015