

12 angry men movie essay sample

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In a world where the jury is the voice of the people's justice, twelve men sit in a room poised to determine the fate of one boy's life. Did he do it? If he didn't, who did? Why would a young man kill his beloved father with a switchblade knife? The moment that the jury-comprised of twelve Caucasian men, abhorrent in today's society-entered the small, blank, bleak room, they had already come to the conclusion that the young man was guilty as charged without deliberation.

One lone man stood his ground and had the guts to stand up to the others and profess that he believed the man could not be found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt due to conflicting information. How could he prove it? Through verbal and nonverbal communication, the one lonely juror convinced the other eleven men of the young man's innocence. One can never underestimate the power of persuasion; even in the face of extreme prejudice, bias, ignorance, and conflicting personalities the juror persevered. Juror number eight was clever, cunning, and persuasive in his arguments for a not guilty verdict.

He was able to point out the inconsistencies of eyewitnesses and the lackadaisical representation of the court appointed attorney provided. The turning point for juror number eight ,™s argument came when he reenacted the scene of the murder to prove that the eyewitness could not have made the journey from his bedroom to the hallway in fifteen seconds. The jury came back with a not guilty verdict due to the unrelenting juror who believed in the innocence of one man. One of the most profound scenes in the movie is the entrance of the jurors into the deliberation chambers of the courtroom and the initial vote.

This scene shows the jurors in their glory as they begin to voice and discuss their thoughts and beliefs about the cases and the accused. The jurors,™ perception of the boy was solid upon entering the jury room due to their stereotyping of the boy and his rearing. Many presumed him guilty based on previous interactions or , Nsknown fact , N? of people growing up in a low socioeconomic environment. The fact that he was Latino and young-eighteen to be exact-aided the jurors in their presumption of his guilt. The only man that wanted to look at the boy as an individual and give him the benefit of the doubt was juror number eight.

Because the jurors had generalized their experiences of this group of people, they walked in, cast their vote, and were ready to walk out with the verdict without deliberating; but with the non guilty ballot cast, they were not able to get out that easily. Stereotyping -" ,!means to cast a person in a preset mold — to deny individuality. The word comes from a copying process invented in 1725. " The Engines of Our Ingenuity, John H. Lienhard, University of Houston-is a major concept in the beginning of this movie.

Each man had already preconceived notions of the Latino community and how , Nsall of them are . These men were using stereotyping as a shortcut to put the boy away, regardless of his guilt. There is no way of knowing how or why these men learned to stereotype, although it is believed that stereotyping is learned from the environment that one is reared in; but we do know that they were using this behavior to avoid the difficult and arduous task or deliberating the fate of the young man. Many of the men were

resistant to listening to juror number eight and his grandiose ideas of innocence for the young man.

Many listed the fact that he had come from a bad home-one juror even said that, Nsslums are breeding grounds for criminals was in foster care, and had been arrested for several crimes. The men had narrowed their arguments to profiling- , Nsa form of stereotyping in which a group of individuals is singled out, typically on the basis of race or ethnicity for intensive inquiry, scrutinizing, or investigation? (Judge, 155). One juror was able to sympathize with the boy on trial because of his past. The juror was also raised in the slums but had made his way out and became appalled with the other jurors accusations of the slums being a breeding ground for criminals.

He became incredulous and demanded that the juror who made the statement to revise what he said and recognize that not all individuals from the slums are criminals. This is a prime example of profiling. Oral communication has played a huge factor in the deliberations in the jury room. Up to this point each juror has conveyed his belief through speech. NsA verbal message can be conveyed and a response received in a minimal amount of time. If the receiver is unsure of the message, rapid feedback allows for early detection by the sender and, hence, allows for early correction.

Some jurors were eloquent in the way they relayed their reasonings to the others, and some were very loud and abrupt and had little evidence to support their beliefs but relied purely on prejudices, biases, and ignorance in an effort to get a quick response. These jurors also used this opportunity to

elicit any responses or feedback or make corrections to others ,TM reasonings. Many of the jurors relied on the oral messages that they received through the testimony of eyewitnesses in the courtroom.

It can be argued that everybody movement has meaning and no movement is accidental , N? (Judge, 373). One opposing juror moved around them room and sat next to juror number eight to establish a connection by telling a story and pulling out a picture. This simple gesture of verbal and nonverbal communication was meant unintentionally to bring the two jurors closer together and establish a bond that could bring them onto the same page in their decision. Others moved closer to each other when they agreed with each other to establish a united front against those who did not agree with them.

This simple gesture can be intimidating to others and was successful in persuading some of the jurors who were on the fence with their decision. One man in particular, changed his vote several times depending on the number of jurors that were for or against the charges. Jurors moved away from the table one at a time in an effort to show frustration with the deliberation process and towards the one juror who was acting out. The juror was yelling racial obscenities in an effort to persuade the other jurors to vote guilty.

This simple act of nonverbal communication by the other eleven jurors complicated any further oral communication the group might have with the one juror who still believed the young boy to be guilty based on his profiling of the boy. The jurors were uncomfortable with the situation and expressed

this through their body language. The jurors moved several feet from the table and stood with their backs to the table with their arms crossed.

But, Nobody position or movement does not by itself have a precise or universal meaning, but when it is linked with spoken language, it gives fuller meaning to a sender,™s message.(Judge, 373) They took a nonverbal stand against the only juror left with any expressed prejudice and came back to the deliberating table once again to continue their discussion once the juror had calmed down. The final deliberations combined with the nonverbal stand is what finally brought the juror around. No one wants to be left out of the majority. Emotions played a huge factor in the delivery of verbal and nonverbal communication between the jurors. , NsEmotions are intense feelings that are directed at someone or something , N? (Judge, 261).

Many jurors had deep-seated hate towards the boy and his background. Others were anxious about getting out of the jury room and on with their appointments, jobs, and families. Through out the scene the jurors faced a dozen emotions anger, contempt, enthusiasm, envy, fear, frustration, disappointment, embarrassment, disgust, happiness, hate, hope, jealousy, joy, love, pride, surprise, and sadness , N? (Judge, 262). In any situation, emotions will play a huge role in the way that a person reacts to a situation and the way that they communicate with others.

Emotions come out in the intonation of our voice, the way that we hold our bodies, and even in our facial expressions. These emotions can intensify and have a effect. In the beginning of the movie juror number three was calm and gave feedback with ease, by the end of the movie his emotions had

intensified and he was not able to clearly state why he thought the young man was guilty. In the last scene juror three decided he indeed did not want to stand alone because of his prejudice and decided the facts will set the young man free.

The men were able to prove reasonable doubt by using their communication skills-both verbal and nonverbal. It is amazing that the jurors were able to overcome their prejudices, biases, and ignorance by deliberating the facts or lack there of. The cunning use of words, ideas, and time bought juror number eight the time needed to plant and grow the seed of reasonable doubt and save a young man from dying in the electric chair. No one should ever doubt the power of communication, especially when faced with a harrowing decision.