

Returning to the story of '12 Angry Men'



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By **John Vollinger**
Go! Magazine

As the summer weather has turned to that of fall, seemingly on a dime (which always seems to be the case), I took a return visit to the hot, stuffy juror deliberation room of "12 Angry Men" — the stellar 1957 film starring Henry Fonda.

With Fonda's understated performance, and backed by 11 other impressive performances by Lee J. Cobb, Jack Ward, and many others, we get a glimpse inside the fictional case of an 18 year old from a rough neighborhood accused of stabbing his own father. Although the entire story takes place within the one room, the writing does wonders in its ability to give the entire premise of the story, as if we had heard the entire trial ourselves.

We learn that the prosecu-

tion has made a solid case, with very little rebuttal from the defense, and all of the jurors are convinced of the defendant's guilt — all except one. We come to find out that this latter juror doesn't necessarily think the young man is innocent, rather he refuses to condemn someone to the death sentence in any haste; he believes that something of this gravity deserves, at the very least, some discussion. The rest of the movie consists of the jurors talking through the evidence they have seen and heard, and deciding whether the arguments against the defendant hold weight, or if they might have been a bit too rash in their assumptions and, consequently, their decisions.

What plays out, beautifully, is the timeless discussion of how we make our decisions, and how we treat those with

whom disagree. We see those who might want the best for the world, revealing the insidious — or perhaps only thoughtless — roots of their ideals, and are forced to consider from where we have derived our own ideas about the world. Worse than these, we see the gravest villainy in those individuals who

are without care and conviction. Taking a side with conviction may lead to argument, but as long as you have consideration for the other side you are both, at least, moving the conversation forward. Conversely, abstaining from investing yourself in those questions that truly matter only works to stagnate

the ideas, and therefore the machinations, of the world.

Though perhaps slow by today's standard of movies, there is something calm and crystal-line about this classic, and it is definitely worth the watch. "12 Angry Men" can be rented on Google Play from any device with an internet connection.

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