

BOLHOUSE, BAAR & LEFERE, P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

LESSONS FROM ATTICUS FINCH

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The latest American actor to be honored by the U.S. Postal Service is the great Gregory Peck. The stamp portrays Peck in his role as Atticus Finch, the southern lawyer from the 1960 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, ***To Kill a Mockingbird***, by Harper Lee.

Atticus Finch was appointed to represent a black man during the depression in the state of Alabama. His client, Tom Robinson, was accused of raping a young, white woman. In addition to sharing a great story with her readers, Lee also shares a few lessons on courage, compassion and racism – lessons we all need to learn and remember, even 50 years later.

At one point Atticus tells his son, Jem, that courage is “when you’re licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what.” Lee artfully teaches us the lesson that human dignity and respect for others should be fundamental and universal. At a time when we Americans can be narrow-minded and often quick to judge and condemn, Atticus’ message to his daughter, Scout, is a lesson for all of us: “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view; until you climb around in his skin and walk around in it.”

If you’ve not taken time to read this classic, I encourage you to put ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** on your summer reading list. For those less inclined to read, the 1962 movie starring Peck won 3 Oscars, including Best Actor for Peck, and was nominated for 5 others. In 2003, Atticus Finch was voted the *Greatest American Film Hero* of all time by the American Film Institute. Imagine the many heroes that needed to be defeated to win this honor!

A half-century later, Atticus Finch continues to be an incredible role model for each one of us, attorney or not. And as an attorney as well as an avid stamp collector, I thank the U.S. Postal Service for reminding us of the greatest American film hero, Atticus Finch.