



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 30, 2018

Bill Cosby's Conviction of Sexual Assault Overshadows the Rest of His Life

Once considered America's favorite father figure, Bill Cosby has experienced a stunning fall from grace. On Thursday, April 26, a Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, jury convicted the comedian and actor on three counts of felony aggravated indecent assault of Andrea Constand.

The assaults apparently occurred in 2004 when Constand worked for Temple University, Cosby's alma mater. Each count carries a standard sentence of a \$25,000 fine and 5-10 years in prison, which means that the 80-year-old Cosby could spend the rest of his life behind bars.

Cosby continues to deny all charges and plans to appeal, according to his attorney Tom Mesereau. "Yes, yes. Very strongly," said an angry Mesereau when asked by reporters about the possibility of appeal.

The case was originally tried last summer in Montgomery County, but ended in a mistrial when the jury reported that it was hopelessly deadlocked.

"When the verdict was read, I was just filled with awe and so excited and so happy," Montgomery County District Attorney Kristen Feden told CNN. "I was so happy for Andrea. I was so proud of her. And I was so happy for victims just everywhere.... It was a very awesome message to victims."

Cosby reacted calmly to the verdict. But later, after the jury had been dismissed, Cosby stood up and lashed out at prosecutor Kevin Steele, who had asked that bail be revoked. Steele had claimed that Cosby had a private plane and that no amount of bail could keep him from fleeing. At that point, Cosby shouted, "He doesn't have a private plane you as**ole!" Judge Steven O'Neill did not revoke bail but did order that Cosby wear a GPS tracking device should he decide to travel to one of his other homes out of state.

A sentencing hearing has not yet been scheduled, but by Pennsylvania law, it must occur within 90 days of conviction.

The conviction is the low point of an astonishing downfall that began in 2014 when dozens of women began accusing Cosby of drugging them, then sexually assaulting them. Whispered accusations of such behavior by Cosby had been heard in show business back to the nineties.

Cosby's career dates back more than five decades with his standup comedy career beginning in 1961. In 1965, he landed the role of Alexander Scott in NBC's drama *I Spy*, which ran for three seasons on NBC. Cosby was the first African-American to land a lead role on a major network show. He later



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starred in a sitcom *The Bill Cosby Show* on NBC for two seasons. Cosby also created the animated series *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, which was based on characters from his standup routine and people from his own life. Fat Albert was a Saturday morning fixture from 1972-1985. Cosby also had a prolific recording career, releasing more than 20 comedy albums and 15 albums of his music. He's received four Emmy Awards and nine Grammy Awards.

But his reputation as "America's Dad" would not be established until the premier of *The Cosby Show* in 1984. Cosby starred as obstetrician Cliff Huxtable, with Phylicia Rashad starring as his wife, Claire. The show was groundbreaking in that it showed a financially successful African-American family. It was widely praised for breaking racial stereotypes.

As a result of his stature in the culture, Cosby was often asked to speak at commencement addresses, and he was given dozens of honorary degrees from all over the country. In the wake of the many sexual assault allegation against him, most of those honorary degrees have been rescinded.

One speech that Cosby gave in 2004 at an NAACP award ceremony caused a great deal of controversy. Referred to as "the Pound Cake Speech," it was highly critical of certain aspects of African-American culture, condemning the use of "[Ebonics](#)," and the prevalence of single-parent families. Cosby was adamant that African-Americans should not blame discrimination or government institutions for their problems.

From the Pound Cake Speech: "Looking at the incarcerated, these are not political criminals. These are people going around stealing Coca-Cola. People are getting shot in the back of the head over a piece of pound cake! And then we all run out and are outraged, 'The cops shouldn't have shot him.' What the hell was he doing with the pound cake in his hand? I wanted a piece of pound cake just as bad as anyone else, and I looked at it and I had no money. And something called parenting said, 'If you get caught with it you're going to embarrass your mother.' Not 'You're going to get your butt kicked.' No. 'You're going to embarrass your family.'"

If Cosby is guilty — and it seems certain that he is — he deserves his punishment, no question. It's just incredibly sad to lose someone of such high profile who seemed to have a grasp on what the problems with African-American culture actually are.

Maybe [Kanye West](#) will step up in his place.

Photo of people protesting Bill Cosby: [pixelhouse](#) via [wikimedia](#)



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