

# The Hurricane (2000)

M 15+ medium level violence, adult themes, medium level coarse language

Hollywood Jesus: <http://www.hollywoodjesus.com/hurricane.htm>

IMDB: <http://imdb.com/title/tt0174856/>

## Directed by

Norman Jewison

## Writing credits (WGA)

Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter (book)

Sam Chaiton (book)

## Cast overview, first billed only:

Denzel Washington

Vicellous Reon Shannon

Deborah Kara Unger

Liev Schreiber

John Hannah

Dan Hedaya

Debbi Morgan

Runtime: 145 min

Country: USA

Language: English

Color: Black and White / Color (DeLuxe)

## Synopsis

The Hurricane is based on the inspiring true life story of Robin 'Hurricane' Carter. Carter's story inspired Bob Dylan's international best selling single 'Hurricane'. He was one of the best boxers of his time, a young man whose dreams of winning the middle-weight boxing title were destroyed when he was arrested at the peak of his career for the murder of three people in a New Jersey bar. Wrongfully accused, Carter (played in the film by Denzel Washington) was convicted and sentenced to three life terms in jail, where he decided to channel his desperation and despair into writing his life story. That story, *The Sixteenth Round*, was published and eventually read by a young Canadian, Lesra Martin, who together with his social activist guardians eventually mounted a full-time campaign to get Carter released. The campaign to free Carter drew national interest in the USA and throughout the world assisted by impassioned pleas from Muhammad Ali and Bob Dylan. Triumphant and inspiring, the tale of Carter's time in jail and eventual release is a searing and uplifting story of an innocent man's long fight for justice. The film is uncompromising in dealing with the burning and the controversial issues of racial injustice.

## Group discussion

- What are the issues raised in the film?
- Reflecting on the lives - individual and collective - depicted in the film, what biblical stories and gospel values/truths engage with the film's story?
- What insights do we gain into contemporary society, and the human condition?

'In *The Hurricane*, it's at the critical turning point in the plot when we are about to learn whether the wrongly-convicted Rubin Carter will be set free (after 20 years in jail) that the screenwriter invokes the scriptures. In this case, Carter weaves together passages from the book of Genesis and the Gospels to express his love and gratitude for all that the young man, Lesra, has done to set him free. Carter links Lesra with the biblical Lazarus whom Christ raised from the dead, and concludes his thankful monologue with these words, 'Hatred has put me in prison, but love will get me out'. Suddenly the movie becomes a parable of liberation and redemption, as its central characters find a way from death to life and from slavery to freedom'.

(Charles Henderson, <http://christianity.about.com/culture/christianity/library/weekly/aa032000.htm>)

## Re-imagination/ hope and despair/salvation/ the power of love/punishment

Carter has been hounded by bigoted and corrupt detective Pesca, since 11, spending years behind jail. Railroaded into prison for the killings, Carter builds his body as a weapon, feeds his mind with reading and

decides to live inside his body alone, the only way he can live out the years. 'I will live neither in my cell or in my heart'.

Carter tells his wife, 'I want you to divorce me. I'm dead'.

But there is salvation for Carter from an unlikely source - a young admirer and his three Canadian guardians who begin the extraordinary, difficult, tiresome and selfless task of finding evidence to free Carter.

'Please find it in your hearts not to weaken me with your love', he writes to the quartet when he fears taking another attempt at freedom could break his resolve.

With WA Premier Richard Court moving to reintroduce the death penalty, there is a sobering thought at the emotive end. In today's America, Carter and (his fellow accused friend) Artis would be dead - executed by the death penalty, reintroduced in 1977.

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