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A Response to Stanley Kramer’s *The Defiant Ones*

Stanley Kramer’s *The Defiant Ones* was a genuinely pleasant surprise of an era plagued with racial appropriation and political dogma. There is without a doubt depiction of the racial ideologies of the times, including the use of slurs and expression of stereotypes, but instead of using it for comedic effect it really calls out these tropes for what they really are. Sidney Poitier’s portrayal of Noah Cullen is written as a human being with ideas and experiences, rather than fulfilling the tropey archetypes that defined black characters in cinema. One quote that will stand as the most powerful and poignant to this very day would be the scene where Noah and Joker discuss the truths of their imprisonments, whereas Joker asks what made him so mad about “rolling with the punches,” to which Noah says “I ain't gettin' mad, Joker. I been mad all my natural life” (*The Defiant Ones*). This quote could very well summarize the truth of not only how cinema has affected black people but the American dogma as a whole. It is both astounding and deplorable that to this very day Kramer’s writing in *The Defiant Ones* hasn’t aged a bit in its themes and message.

Works Cited

Kramer, Stanley, director. The Defiant Ones. United Artists, 1958.