

The Defiant Ones, a 1958 film directed by Stanley Kramer, follows two men, one white and one black, as they navigate prejudice and the American South while trying to run away from a life of prison.

What struck me during the viewing was firstly, the language used. Not even five minutes into the film, Sidney Poitier's character, Noah, is called a racial slur. The choice for the "n-word" to be used by a non-Black character in movies is always an interesting one to see as a Black woman; it is jarring to hear even in modern movies, so to hear the word in a movie from the 1950's was surprising to say the least. It was interesting to hear it due to who the director was. Stanley Kramer has been known to advocate for civil rights and social justice in his movies, so a using a slur five minutes into the movie was a bold choice, and Kramer used the word to capture the audience's attention, as well as show the stakes and setting for the characters.

The characters are in direct conflict all throughout the movie, with the white prisoner, John Jackson, in conflict with what is expected of him as a white man of the time, and what is morally right. It is interesting to see the characters written in a way that makes them do and say things that a majority of movie-goers at the time might have agreed with; Johnson and Noah are at odds due to their color differences. They have preconceived ideas about each other due to the society they live in; while Johnson is rude and belittling to Noah, Noah does not trust Johnson due to how he has been treated as a black man in society. Their behavior is seen to be unfavorable for their survival in the film, and by showing how dysfunctional, and at times, childish, the behavior is, the movie also condemns this prejudiced behavior in real life. The movie even continues this by adding in a woman who is against Poitier's character; she sees him as little more than a fascination or plaything for Johnson, and her sentiments echo some attitudes of the time. Johnson chooses his partner in crime, Noah, over what is expected, showing that he has given the man trust besides their differences. I think that for the time it was written, *The*

*Defiant Ones* does a good job of navigating racial tensions and why one must trust in their fellow man, even when society tells a person not to. The moral of the movie isn't too heavy that a person subjected to racism would grow bored or irritated at the message, and it is broad enough to reach those who are not subject to such things.