

# THE HURRICANE (1999)

*Rated R. Running time: 2 hr. 26 min.*

*Our content rating (0-10): Violence-7; Language-4;  
Sex/Nudity-1*

*Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause  
against an ungodly people;  
from those who are deceitful and unjust deliver  
me!*

*For you are the God in whom I take refuge;  
why have you cast me off?*

*Why must I walk about mournfully  
because of the oppression of the enemy?  
O send out your light and your truth; let them  
lead me;*

*let them bring me to your holy hill  
and to your dwelling.*

*Psalm 43:1-3*

A social justice story of the first order, Norman Jewison's film stars Denzil Washington as the New Jersey boxer Rubin Carter wrongfully accused of murdering three people in a bar. If the film is to be believed (there are still folk who dispute Carter's version of events), Carter's nemesis was a racist cop who had him put away when he was a young boy charged with stabbing a prominent white citizen. Carter had stopped the man from molesting a friend and stabbed him only when the molester tried to throw him over a cliff. Years

later, the policeman follows Carter's exploits in the boxing ring and hopes to put him back behind bars. He finds his opportunity when petty crooks give perjured testimony in exchange for lenient treatment in their own case. An all white jury convicts the boxer, and through an up and down struggle that later included the publication of his book defending himself, and such celebrities as Bob Dylan and Susan Sarandon enlisting in his cause, a second trial and conviction, Carter becomes convinced that he will end his days in prison. He forces his wife to get a divorce, and he withdraws from all outside contacts and external desires in the belief that then the racist society that had imprisoned him can no longer touch him.

It is the chance purchase of Carter's book by a black teenager being raised by a group of white Canadians that leads to the break-through in Carter's status. Lesra, son of American ghetto parents, was being given an opportunity for a better life by a well-meaning group of Canadians. Carter's book was the first Lesra had ever been interested in, let alone read. The teenager becomes so obsessed with the wrongfulness of the boxer's incarceration that he writes to the boxer. Carter is moved by the boy's words, and thus breaks his rule of not answering his correspondence. One letter leads to another, and by then the three Canadians (the original 9 are reduced to a more manageable number for the sake of drama) are also caught up in Carter's case, so they visit, and then move to New Jersey to work on his case. It takes a long time, especially in the face of so much apathy and hostility, but the results prove again how one person can make a difference.

**Good teaching/preaching scenes:** Carter quotes from the KJV of Genesis 29:32, "Behold a son." He tells Lesra that his name is a form of Lazarus, "Behold, a son who is risen from the dead...Hate put me in prison. Love's gonna get me out!" Lesra agrees, "I'm gonna get you out." "You already have," Carter replies, meaning far more than just physical release.

The world view of Carter in this film is very different from that of the chief characters in *Snow Falling On Cedars* (also reviewed in the March 2000 VP), the second film's characters stating that we live in an indifferent universe in which chance prevails. Carter tells Lesra that he didn't just pick up that book by chance: he was led to do it. There is a Power that works in the universe to set things right.

*From March 2000 Visual Parables.*