

The movie "The Hurricane" tells the true story of an African American boxer named Rubin "Hurricane" Carter (played by Denzel Washington). It examines his life in racially torn America from his childhood days to his late forty's. During this time Rubin changes both physically and emotionally.

Rubin grew up in the American town of Paterson, New Jersey. The population was largely African American but as in most places in America the whites had all the power. Rubin was a shy and very wary child with a speech impediment. These characteristics may have been caused partly by the racism he had already encountered. Despite this, he was not afraid to stand up for himself. This comes through in the movie when he uses violence to defend his friend from a child molester.

Rubin's teen years were mainly spent behind bars where he was angry and embittered with life. At the age of 18 he escaped from juvenile detention and joined the U.S army where he started boxing. He realized that this was the way to harness his anger at the world. It changed him from a non-confident, shy boy to a young adult with high self-esteem and a bright future. He felt that he had overcome his unfortunate background and was also happy to find love for a lady named Thelma.

Rubin's new life, however, was turned upside down when he was put back into jail to finish the rest of his sentence. His powerful determination and mental strength showed when he decided 'to take control of his body and turn it into a weapon'. He gave up all the 'worthless luxuries' that prisoners love like movies and cigarettes and decided that his body would eventually set him free and kill anybody who wanted to keep him in prison.

One year later Rubin was set free from prison. He vowed 'upon everything holy not to come back, to go back there ever again'. Shortly after being released Rubin's boxing career sky-rocketed and as he grew more successful his personality changed. He was flamboyant and arrogant. He shaved his head, wore expensive clothing and owned luxury cars.

On June 17, 1966 Rubin was again the victim of racism when he was wrongfully convicted of a triple murder and sentenced to three life terms in prison. This time Rubin was much more defiant and willing to fight for his rights. He decided that, as an innocent man, he could not cooperate with the prison authorities as if he were guilty. "I have committed no crime. A crime has been committed against me"

His actions led to him being put in solitary confinement. Here the movie showed what he was prepared to endure to maintain his dignity as a human being who had been wrongfully treated.

Rubin spent three months in solitary confinement. During this time he changed immensely. He discovered that part of his mind was angry and bitter. However another part was proud and disciplined. His appearance changed a great deal with his facial hair becoming long and curly and his clothes filthy. All of these factors made his release from

solitary all the more rewarding and he emerged proud and determined not to allow the system to defeat him emotionally.

“I will bend time to my own clock. When the prisoners are awake, I will sleep. When they sleep I will wake. I will live neither in their cell, nor in my own heart, only in my mind and my spirit.”

Rubin put himself through physical exercise to maintain his abilities both physically and mentally. He studied, worked on appeals, and eventually wrote a book called “The Sixteenth Round”.

Rubin’s hopes seemed to lie in this book. He had discovered the power of writing and believed it was his way to get a new trial. He believed that if he was retried he would be set free. His motivation to set himself free was lifted considerably with this belief.

Several new appeals were given to Rubin and every time they failed. All of Carter’s hopes were gone. He was dejected and livid with his life situation. He considered himself as good as dead and gave up all hope of getting freed.

“I’m dead. Just bury me, please”. This attitude led to him cutting off his wife Thelma.

“I cannot do all the years I have got to do in here knowing that they can take your beautiful face away from me anytime they want to”.

Rubin now seemed mentally depressed. He had doubts about his ability to do the time when he received a letter from Lesra Martin. Lesra was an African American teenage boy who lived in Canada. He had read Rubin’s book and realised that his life was just like Rubin’s was. Eventually he went and visited Rubin in prison. Rubin felt that he was helping Lesra. It gave him joy and hope that others would read his book and be convinced of his innocence.

Lesra’s family started fighting for Rubin. Although Rubin didn’t believe they could set him free it gave him something to hang on to and it renewed his mental strength. He eventually won a new trial and was set free.

Rubin changed significantly throughout the story. His life had been wasted by racism. However, he maintained his dignity and his beliefs. His openness towards Lesra was the most important thing to setting him free. Although you don’t see him after he is set free, you felt that Rubin would make the most of what was left of his life.

Bibliography

Hurricane (Video). 1999. Universal Pictures. America

