

The Great Debaters
written by Robert Eisele

James Farmer Jr. (Denzel Whitaker): In Texas they lynch Negroes. My teammates and I saw a man strung up by his neck and set on fire. We drove through a lynch mob, pressed our faces against the floorboard. I looked at my teammates. I saw the fear in their eyes and, worse, the shame. What was this Negro's crime that he should be hung without trial in a dark forest filled with fog. Was he a thief? Was he a killer? Or just a Negro? Was he a sharecropper? A preacher? Were his children waiting up for him? And who are we to just lie there and do nothing. No matter what he did, the mob was the criminal. But the law did nothing. Just left us wondering, "Why?" My opponent says nothing that erodes the rule of law can be moral. But there is no rule of law in the Jim Crow south. Not when Negroes are denied housing. Turned away from schools, hospitals. And not when we are lynched. St Augustine said, "An unjust law is no law at all." Which means I have a right, even a duty to resist. With violence or civil disobedience. You should pray I choose the latter.