

No Way Out

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Abstract

The golden age of *film noir* was from roughly 1940 to 1960. During this period Hollywood produced dozens of *film noir* movies. Sharing many common elements, the vast majority of these films skirted most important social issues of the day and rather centered on psychological and criminal themes. In this paper I examine an exception to this—a *film noir* that does deal directly with a social issue. The 1950 *No Way Out* is a *film noir* that openly confronts race relations in post-war America. I consider the film *No Way Out* both from the viewpoint of its *film noir* components and from what it has to say about post-war American race relations.

Key Words : cinema, *film noir*, post-war American society

Introduction

Film noir is a term that the French *cinéaste* Nino Frank first used in 1946 to describe a certain tendency or movement in American film at the time. While critics have argued whether to call *film noir* a genre, style, or trend, the use of the term *film noir* to describe a large number of American films made principally during the 1940s and 1950s continues. These films share, to a greater or lesser degree, the same cinematic techniques, setting, narrative structures, plot lines, worldview, and character types. While films that can be described as *film noir* are still being made today, the golden age of classical *film noir* is generally considered to have begun with John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and to have ended with Orson Welle's *Touch of Evil* (1958). During this period, Hollywood churned out dozens of *film noirs*, principally in the form of low-budget B movies meant to be the second half of a double feature.

Among the most important characteristics exhibited by *film noir* were:

Cinematic Technique: *Film noir* used camera and lighting to establish and maintain the

mood of a film. Shots from disorienting angles reinforced the psychological imbalance of the characters. Shots from above the characters underscored their insignificance, their subjugation to fate. Close-ups of characters implied restriction. Lighting stressed shadows—especially shadows cast in the shape of jail bars—providing a sense of uneasiness, uncertainty, confinement and doom. Mirrors were often employed to indicate a person's dual nature or the conflicting tendencies within him/her.

Setting: The general setting for most *film noir* was the modern city. This city was usually dark, impersonal, and menacing, with lots of concrete, confining walls, shadows and rain. This was the general setting, but much of *film noir* was actually shot indoors showing confining interiors intersected with shadows. Stairs were used either to show superior-inferior relationships or to imply psychological imbalance.

Narrative Techniques: Narrative techniques fall into three general categories: [1] the language used, [2] the viewpoint adopted, and [3] the timeline followed. The language used in *film noir* tended to be terse, earthy, and full of banter. The story was usually told from the limited standpoint of the protagonist rather than from an all-seeing third person outlook, often using the voice-over narration of the hero. Finally, while the story sometimes flowed in a simple, straight path from the present into the future, the timeline often wound through a series of flashbacks that gradually brought the story up to the present.

Plot Line: There were several common plot patterns in *film noir*. In each of them the hero would inevitably become entangled in some kind of treachery or grief while pursuing his ⁽¹⁾ goal, but the plot would vary depending on the goal. In the first plot pattern, the hero tried to discover the identity of a murderer or the answer to some mystery. The key distinction of this plot variation was that the hero was not initially directly involved with the crime or mystery: he was an outside agent. In another kind of plot, the hero/victim would try to extricate himself from some difficult, compromising, or criminal situation. In this kind of story, the hero was not a bystander but rather a vitally concerned party. The third common plot variation was similar to the second, but it was such a common pattern that I think it should be treated separately. In this plot pattern the hero/victim attempted to make up for, escape from, or rectify something from his past. Often *film noir* plots contained elements from more than one of these patterns.

Worldview: To say that *film noir* had a pessimistic view of life would be a gross understatement. Happy endings were rare. The world was generally dark and threatening,

with traps and pitfalls for even the best of men, and even the best of men had their 'tragic flaws'. In fact, it was a common theme—harking back to Freud—that the roots of our doom lay within us. Again and again in *film noir*, men stumbled because they gave in to some inner compulsion: it was sometimes greed and sometimes sexual attraction to a *femme fatale*. Whatever it was, it was irresistible and inescapable: it was fate.

Character Types: There were several recurring character types in *film noir*, and films often revolved around their relationships. The three main types were [1] (male) hero, [2] *femme fatale*, and [3] domestic woman. The hero could be a seeker of the truth, a victim trying to escape some terrible fate, or a combination of the two. The *femme fatale* was typically a sexually-provocative 'woman with a past'. The domestic woman was a steadfast, supportive invitation to a 'normal' family life. The hero's fate was typically determined by whether, in the end, he chose (or couldn't escape from) the *femme fatale* and was destroyed—or chose the domestic woman and was 'saved'.

A cursory review of some representative *film noir* titles suggests that the basic plot themes fell into two broad categories: psychological and criminal. *Suspicion* (1941), *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Cornered* (1945), *Strange Illusion* (1945), *The Spiral Staircase* (1946), and *In a Lonely Place* (1945) all hint at the psychological element. On the other hand, titles such as *This Gun For Hire* (1942), *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), *The Killers* (1946), *Cloak and Dagger* (1946), *Detective Story* (1951), and *Witness to Murder* (1954) suggest a criminal element. Of course, these were not mutually exclusive; much *film noir* has both elements. The important point, though, is that these two themes tended to define the vast majority of classical *film noir*. *Film noir*, for the most part, dealt with psychological imbalance and/or crime (law enforcement). It did not, in the main, deal directly with social issues.⁽²⁾

In this paper, I will discuss one of the rare exceptions—a *film noir* that did deal directly with a social issue: race discrimination.⁽³⁾ I will consider the film *No Way Out* both from the viewpoint of its *film noir* components and from what it had to say about 1950 American race relations.

No Way Out

The year was 1950—four years before the Supreme Court's historical decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* would finally outlaw 'separate but equal' school segregation in the United States. The US armed forces were just beginning to take steps toward full racial integration.

Even outside the more blatantly racist South, blacks and whites led largely segregated lives—there were separate schools, separate churches, separate restaurants, and even separate hospitals. In the South, this separation was maintained by so-called ‘Jim Crow laws’, which served, in effect, to create two separate, but unequal, societies—one black and one white. Outside the South, the separation was maintained by prejudice and custom rather than laws. This was the year when Twentieth Century Fox released *No Way Out*, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz and starring Sidney Poitier in his first film role.

The story opens in typical *film noir* style with an emergency call being routed through a busy switchboard. A man in uniform answers the phone and repeats, “A shooting . . . two men . . . Milton and Bay.” He jots down “7:58” on a memo pad and stands up. Then unexpectedly he says, “Here we go, doc.” A doctor rises from a cot and follows the uniformed man out the door. The ambulance carrying the doctor and uniformed driver screeches away into the dark, anonymous, *noir* city, siren blasting.

We would have expected the scene to have been a police station, but this clever variation on the normal emergency-call opening introduces the hospital as an appropriate setting for this *film noir*.

The story continues as we follow a young black man dressed in a suit as he exits an elevator and walks down a hospital hallway. He is accosted by Dr. Daniel Wharton, the Chief Medical Resident, who pats him on the shoulder and congratulates him for passing his medical board examination. For the 1950 American audience, the portrayal of a black man as a doctor in a white hospital would have been quite a shock. Dr. Luther Brooks, the young black man, tells Wharton that he’s applying for another year of residence at the hospital: “I think I need a little more time than the others.” The clear implication is that Luther Brooks, as a black man, is judged by different standards from the ‘other’ (white) doctors. He thanks Wharton for his support and interest, and Wharton replies, “My interest in you, Brooks, is no greater than in any other good doctor on my service.” The fact that he says this at all indicates that he is well aware of the prevailing double standard.

What title could be more *noir* than “*No Way Out*”? Trapped! No way to escape! We will find that the prison that traps the protagonist in *No Way Out* is largely one of birth and circumstance. He is born a black man in a prejudiced society. But at the same time, the prison is partially of his own making in that he chooses to ignore the limits placed on him by society.

In *No Way Out*, Wharton may serve as the voice of scientific reason, and, if his voice and views prevailed, Luther would not be trapped at all. Unfortunately, as we shall see, his voice is not the prevailing one in the society Luther inhabits.

Dr. Brooks is asked to cover for a sick intern in the hospital's prison ward. On the way up to the prison ward, Brooks talks with a fellow black, Lefty, who runs the elevator. We immediately recognize that Lefty "has been around" by the fact that he has a long scar running from his right ear down to his mouth. Lefty asks about the exam, and when Brooks says, "Everybody's gotta take it so as you can get your license to practice," Lefty comments, "Well, the boys were saying it was just for colored doctors." It's clear that blacks ("the boys") are hypersensitive about how they are treated and sense unfairness even when it doesn't exist. As Brooks continues to insist that the examination system is fair, we notice that, in characteristic *film noir* use of lighting, Brooks' body is crisscrossed by shadows reminiscent of jail cell bars. The narrow confines of the elevator underscore his entrapment.

In the prison ward, Brooks is asked to treat two prisoners, Ray and Johnny Biddle of Beaver Canal. They have both been wounded trying to rob a gas station. One is barely conscious, but as Brooks asks questions about his condition, the other simply says, "And what's it to you?" and spits. Then, looking at Brooks, he continues, "Clean that up! Where's your mop?" And so begins a series of racial slurs from Ray that continue to escalate throughout the duration of the film. Expressions such as 'dirty nigger', 'black rat', 'jungle monkey', and 'coon' are repeatedly uttered.

While the hospital staff doesn't proffer epithets such as Ray's, they do harbor doubts about Brooks since he is black. Brooks suspects that Johnny may have a brain tumor and prepares to do a spinal tap. When one of the guards doubts the treatment that Brooks is giving Johnny and questions whether Brooks is really a doctor, a white attendant replies, "No, I know we've got one of them in the house. This must be him."

Ray and John Biddle interject the characteristically *noirish* criminal element into the film. Ray's criminal patois echoes the speech heard in dozens of *film noirs* although the racial epithets are unique.

Johnny dies while Brooks is performing the spinal tap, and Ray goes wild, threatening to kill Brooks. Dr. Wharton considers the spinal tap to have been reasonable and supports Brooks,

but he does suggest that a brain tumor may not have been the only possible diagnosis. Brooks begins to suffer from self-doubt: "There is a possibility that I killed him, isn't there? . . . That I was careless in the spinal tap. That his brother's Negro-baiting got me down." Wharton continues to support Brooks, though: "I don't want to ever hear you say anything like that again. You're a capable doctor. You were the doctor in charge. You did what you thought was right, and there's an end to it."

Luther's self-doubt recalls the psychological element so prevalent in much of *film noir*. Whether the protagonist succumbs to his doubts or prevails over them is often the deciding factor in classical *noir*.

Dr. Brooks and Wharton leave the patient's room and continue their conversation in the hallway. They discuss the problematic treatment and diagnosis, and, although Wharton supports Brooks' course of action, he says the only way to confirm things is to perform an autopsy. Brooks fears that without an autopsy he will be called a murderer, but Wharton interjects, "Every time anybody dies in a county hospital, somebody yells murder." Brooks counters, "But it's not the same when they yell it at me . . . They're not yelling at the doctor. They're yelling at the nigger." To get an autopsy, however, a family member must consent. The two doctors do not realize that their conversation is being 'overheard' by the third Biddle brother, George.⁽⁴⁾ George quickly relates the doctors' conversation to Ray, so, of course, when they come to Ray to ask for permission to perform an autopsy, he refuses.

The next day's paper has a back-page article on the hold-up and subsequent death of Johnny. It ends, "The cause of his death was not revealed." Dr. Moreland, the head of the hospital, talks to Wharton about the article and fears a runaway investigation, clearly aware that if the papers knew that Dr. Brooks were a black man there would be trouble, but "Fortunately, there was no mention of Brooks's name or the fact that he was a Negro." Moreland is afraid that if it were known that Brooks is a black man, fund-raising could be adversely affected. In the heated exchange that follows, Wharton clearly represents color-blind, enlightened, 'scientific' thinking: "I'm pro good doctor—black, white or polka dot. As chief resident, I have no more right to wax sentimental over a bad doctor because he happens to be a Negro than I have to discriminate against a good doctor because he's white, Protestant, and independently wealthy." Dr. Moreland, conversely, is the voice of political pragmatism: "Let's hope that this doesn't start something. You've got a couple of important appropriations coming up against strong opposition, and the difference between winning and losing can be the fact

that Brooks is a Negro." Wharton presses Moreland to authorize an autopsy, but, when queried, admits that, in his official capacity, he has no reason for dissatisfaction with Brooks' performance. Moreland refuses to authorize the autopsy, saying, ". . . in my official capacity, I feel that the welfare of the institution would be best served by forgetting the incident as quickly as possible."

Wharton and Moreland clearly represent two opposing forces in post-war America. On the one hand, there is the voice of reason that says, "We are all equal. Discrimination is wrong." On the other, there is the voice of pragmatism saying, "We have to please our customers. If many of them are prejudiced, we'll have to go along with their prejudices or face losing money." While Ray's blind hatred of blacks is easily recognized as somehow 'wrong', Moreland's 'reasoned' justification for prejudice may be more pernicious.

The only chance to authorize an autopsy now is to get the permission of Johnny Biddle's estranged widow, Edith Biddle. Brooks and Wharton visit her in a run-down tenement house in a part of town a slight step up from the Biddles' Beaver Canal. She now goes by her maiden name, Edie Johnson, and claims to have divorced Johnny. There seems to be no love lost between her and the Biddles. She managed to leave Beaver Canal and now has a respectable job as a car-hop at a drive-in. Even so, her appearance and tough-girl mannerism remind one of a classic *femme fatale*. Brooks and Wharton fail to convince her to try to persuade Ray to allow an autopsy, but it's clear after they leave that she is having second thoughts about her decision.

Edie Johnson plays a pivotal role in this film. Whether she is ultimately a 'bad' girl or 'good' girl will largely determine the outcome of the story. Much of the movie centers around her doubts and vacillations. In a sense, she too is represented in the film's title. Unlike Luther, who was born into a prison defined by race, she was born into a prison defined by economic circumstances and the prejudices of those around her.

Brooks returns home to a scene that was certainly a rarity for a 1950 movie. Rather than showing a poor black family living in the ghetto, the film gives us a solidly middle class family that is full of aspirations. Luther, of course, is an up-and-coming doctor, and his brother-in-law is studying to take the exam to qualify to be a mailman. The house is bright, clean, well-furnished, and we are even treated to the sound of violin practice in the background. Luther's wife, Cora, is completely supportive of her husband and has worked long hours to help put Luther through medical school. As Luther falls asleep, Cora soliloquizes on their struggle to get to where they are. She concludes, "We've been a long time getting here. We're tired, but

we're here, honey. We can be happy. We've got a right to be." Of course, she doesn't know that the death of Johnny Biddle threatens that happiness.

Cora is the ultimate *noir* domestic woman—the steadfast, supportive 'bedrock' for her husband and family. In many *noir* movies, the protagonist's fate is determined by his choosing between the *femme fatale* and the domestic woman. In this film, however, there is no choice to be made here. Because of this, the supportive, loving Cora appears quite one-dimensional when contrasted to the angst-ridden Edie.

After thinking things over, Edie decides to visit Ray in the hospital and talk to him about the autopsy. It's clear from their exchange that they have a past. When Edie brings up the autopsy, Ray cleverly tries to dissuade her with racial arguments: "I'm supposed to forget my brother couldn't have a white doctor, forget he'd be alive if he did. Edie, I want to ask you something. If you had a kid, would you send him to a nigger doctor? Would you like one putting his dirty black hands on you?" In spite of this, Edie asks why he won't consent to an autopsy. Ray insists, ". . . they won't be lookin' for anything they don't know. They wanna fix it so that nobody ever knows the truth." Ray convinces Edie that Wharton is playing her for a sucker because, "He's on a spot. He wants an out, a patsy." Edie eventually agrees with Ray and ends with, "Well, what do we do about it? . . . Johnny and the nigger doctor?"

In her exchange with Ray, Edie is caught between two major forces in her life. On the one hand is her desire to think for herself—to listen to the voice of reason as represented by Dr. Wharton. On the other is the pull to return to the facile, blind prejudices of her upbringing. At this point in the story, prejudices win.

Swayed by Ray's arguments about Johnny's death, Edie goes off to 'talk' to George and coordinate actions with a fellow Beaver Canal reprobate, Rocky Miller. Next we see Edie—now dressed in a tough-girl leather jacket—at a low-life pool hall talking to Rocky, George, and two other men. Talk about Johnny's 'murder' and autopsy escalates until they agree to go out and gather men to meet at Andy's junkyard at 9:00. Although it's not openly stated, it's obvious that they have plans for violence. Even tough girl Edie can only go so far and, when she says she's going to work rather than to the junkyard, Rocky tries to strong-arm her and puts George in charge of her to make sure she comes that evening. She protests, "I came here, didn't I? . . . What more do you want? I can't swing a club. I can't break a head. Rocky, I got a right to live too."

Back at the hospital, Luther gets on the elevator and is told by Lefty that he's taking the night off: "Troubles coming over from Beaver Canal, and I'm gonna get me some." Due to a black man who "passes for white" the news of Beaver Canal's plans has already spread to the black community. When Luther tries to stop Lefty by saying "This way you're no better than they are", Lefty replies, "Ain't that askin' a lot for us to be better than them when we get killed just trying to prove we're as good?" Luther tries to forestall the black-white confrontation by calling Alderman Tompkins, but his efforts come to naught.

The race riot ⁽⁵⁾ itself is rather surrealistic. First we see Lefty haranguing a crowd of blacks and explaining how they're going to attack the whites before they leave the junkyard. Then we see the whites in the junkyard getting worked up by beating and banging on junk with their makeshift weapons. George brings Edie to the junkyard, but when she sees the madness and hate in Rocky's eyes, she runs away. Next we see the blacks sneaking in and surrounding the junkyard. At nine o'clock on the agreed signal (a flare), the blacks rush into the junkyard to the shocked expressions of the whites. The ensuing violence is only suggested as the scene ends before any blows are clearly struck.

The build-up to the riot and the riot itself are shot with highly stylized *chiaroscuro* lighting. The violence itself—as in much *film noir*—is suggested rather than shown. The riot serves as the turning point for Edie—the point at which she rejects the Biddles and her past.

Echoing the opening scene of the film, a phone rings in the hospital's prison ward. It's news of the race riot and a request to prepare to accept the wounded. Hearing the uproar, Ray jubilantly questions a guard, "Let me in on it. Is there anything left of nigger town?" To Ray's disappointment, he answers, "It's the other way around. From what I hear the boogies lowered the boom on Beaver Canal."

At his home Dr. Wharton has just gotten off the phone coordinating the hospital response to the race riot when his doorbell rings. It is Edie, looking quite unwell. Wharton leaves for the hospital but insists that Edie stay the night at his house under the charge of Gladys, his black housekeeper. After the riot, Edie is scared to be around a black, but when she collapses trying to leave the house, she allows herself to be tended to by Gladys.

Back at the hospital, the wards and hallways are filled with the casualties of the race riot. Among the dead is Lefty. As Dr. Brooks tries to treat an injured white man, the white man's

mother rushes in and screams, "Keep your black hands off my boy!" and spits in Luther's face. Luther wipes the spit from his face, removes his stethoscope from around his neck, and walks out of the hospital. Just as the riot provided the final impetus for Edie to choose sides, the aftermath of the riot forces Luther to make a decision too.

The next morning finds Edie and Gladys sitting at the breakfast table talking like old friends. Dr. Wharton comes home from the hospital, and, soon after, Cora arrives with news of Luther. He had come home in the middle of the night seemingly angry at the world—and at all whites in particular. Cora and Luther left the house and walked until morning. Luther finally decided that the only way to help him or anybody was the truth, and the only way to get at the truth was through an autopsy. To force an autopsy he has given himself up for the murder of Johnny Biddle.

Luther's decision to give himself up for murder is a brave one. If he is wrong, then his life could be ruined. His opting to turn himself in means he has chosen truth over doubt, reason over emotion. He has decided to work within society to seek answers instead of simply trying to tear society down. In this decision we see the *noir* protagonist resisting the evil tendencies within him and thereby triumphing.

At five o'clock that afternoon, Luther, Cora, Ray, George, and two policemen are sitting in a room waiting for the results of the autopsy. Edie enters and soon the medical examiner comes in to announce that Luther's diagnosis had been correct—a brain tumor. Ray refuses to accept the medical examiner's conclusion and maintains it's a cover-up: "You guys stick together—black and white—like some kind of a mob." When Luther protests and suggests that Ray bring his own doctor, Dr. Wharton encourages him to give it up as a lost cause, saying, "It's no use. You've convinced everyone in this city but one sick mind. Let it go at that." As Luther is leaving, Edie turns to him and says, "I'm glad it turned out all right."

Here perhaps is the film's clearest statement for the voice of reason with regard to race relations. In spite of the irrefutable scientific proof that Luther has not murdered Johnny, Ray continues to blame him. Wharton's message is that they have done all they can and should now just ignore Ray. In a similar vein, Wharton is implying that race relations should not be poisoned by an ignorant, prejudiced few who cannot think rationally. Ray represents these, but, at the same time, Edie represents those who are open to reason.

Ray overhears Wharton say that he'll be away from home for the night. Only Ray, George, and the policeman are left in the waiting room. Because Ray and George can communicate by sign language, they are able to trick the guard and knock him out with a cosh that George is carrying. Ray takes the policeman's gun, and they make it out of the building through the fire escape.

When Edie returns to her apartment, she finds Ray and George lying in wait. Still blaming Luther for Johnny's death and wanting revenge, Ray forces her to call Luther to get him to go to Dr. Wharton's house. Ray leaves for Dr. Wharton's house and leaves George to watch over Edie at her apartment. Taking advantage of George's deafness, Edie turns on the radio full blast so that her neighbors burst into the room and subdue George so she can escape him.

Edie makes an anonymous call to the hospital prison ward to warn that Ray is waiting at Dr. Wharton's house to kill Dr. Brooks. She asks for a police car to be sent to Wharton's house at once. Not completely convinced that the call is real, the policeman in charge instructs his subordinate, "Check to see if Dr. Wharton is home. If no, check Dr. Brooks. If no, check if Ray Biddle's been picked up. If no all around, get a squad car quick down to Dr. Wharton's house."

The policeman's reaction to Edie's call interjects some black humor into this life and death situation. However, it is also a valid comment on the pace of action by official agencies, be they police departments or local, state, and national governments. Even when urgent action is called for, there must be a time-consuming, 'thorough' investigation before action can be taken.

Dr. Brooks arrives at Wharton's house. Soon after, Edie comes. Ray keeps them both at gunpoint, but his injured leg is making him feverish and he rants on, "Catch a nigger by the toe. If he hollers, let him go . . . Nigger! Nigger! Nigger! Poor little nigger kids! Love the little nigger kids! Who loved me? Who loved me?" He forces Luther to lie down on the couch "like Johnny" so he can kill him. Just as he is about to shoot, Edie manages to hit the light switch, causing the shots to go off the mark and simply wound Luther in his shoulder. Ray, on the hand, falls and reopens his leg wound. Edie wants Luther to let him die, but Luther insists on doing all he can to save him. Edie still encourages Luther to kill Ray, but he can't: "He's sick. He's crazy. He's everything you said. But I can't kill a man just because he hates me." With Edie's help, Luther puts a tourniquet around Ray's thigh. We hear sirens in the distance and Ray begins to cry. Luther's final words are "Don't cry white boy. You're gonna live."⁽⁶⁾

Till the end, Ray maintains his irrational hatred for Luther, but Luther underscores his decision not to succumb to blind emotion by trying to help the suffering Ray. It's important to notice that Luther lives because of Edie's actions. It is perhaps the message of this film that all the Edies—those who were perhaps raised with prejudices but are, in the end, open to reason—are America's hope for better racial relations.

Conclusion

Not too surprisingly, *No Way Out* failed to become a box office success. Its depiction of race relations was just too stark, and perhaps the country as a whole was not ready to listen to the 'voice of reason'. It was not even released in most areas of the South. It did, however, garner an Academy Award nomination for Best Writing, Story, and Screenplay.

In summary, *No Way Out* is in many ways a typical *film noir*. The cinematic technique, setting, narrative technique, plot line, worldview, and character types are quintessentially *noir*. It is quite atypical, however, in that it deals with an important social issue and contains a social message.

[Notes]

- (1) In keeping with *film noir*'s misogynistic leanings, female heroes are basically unheard of.
- (2) The closest to constantly re-occurring social issues in *film noir* would have to be [1] corruption—especially political corruption—and [2] the readjustment problems of returning GIs. A few examples of *film noir* that deal with corruption would be *Street with no Name* (1948), *The Big Heat* (1953), *The Phenix City Story* (1956), and *The Boss* (1956). Returning GIs feature in *Cornered* (1945), *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), *Crossfire* (1947), *The Crooked Way* (1949), etc. Even when these issues were raised, however, the context was inevitably a psychological or criminal drama.
- (3) Elia Kazan's 1947 non-*noir* *Gentlemen's Agreement* and Edward Dmytyk's 1947 *noir* *Crossfire* both dealt with anti-Semitism. Interestingly, *Crossfire* was originally about homophobia but was 'softened' by making it about anti-Semitism. It was not until Robert Wise's 1959 *Odds Against Tomorrow* that we get another *film noir* that portrays anti-black racial prejudice as clearly as *No Way Out*.
- (4) George is sitting too far away to actually hear them, but being a deaf mute, he can read their lips.
- (5) Unfortunately, race riots have a long history in America. The most serious that occurred before *No Way Out* was released were in Wilmington, N. C. (1898), Atlanta, Ga. (1906), Springfield, Ill. (1908), East St. Louis Ill. (1917), Chicago, Ill. (1919), Tulsa, Okla. (1921) and Detroit, Mich. (1943).
- (6) In the original ending Luther is killed by Ray.

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