



FILM: **MUDBOUND**

FDG RATING: 3.6 Five smiley face icons in a row, with the first three filled and the last two empty, representing a rating of 3.6 out of 5.

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Dee Rees: *Director*
Jason Mitchell: *Actor, Ronsel Jackson*
Garrett Hedlund: *Actor, Jaime McAllen*
Mary J. Blige: *Actress, Florence Jackson*
Carey Mulligan: *Actress, Laura McAllen*
Jason Clarke: *Actor, Henry McAllen*
Rob Morgan: *Actor, Hap Jackson*

DATE: Jan. 21, 2018

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **MUDBOUND**

The good thing about Mudbound being released by Netflix is that you can watch it while lounging in your favorite viewing room. The flip side is you can get too comfortable as one discussion couple admitted, who thought it started slow so quickly fell asleep. Not the case for the group of us who gathered around Sharon's big screen TV -- we were riveted to the story, the characters, superb acting, and we were deeply disturbed by scenes of horrible racism.

The film is about 2 families and their struggles, living on a rundown farm in the Mississippi delta, during and after World War II.

Henry McAllen and his wife Laura, are a white, college educated, couple, from cultured families. Living in Memphis, Henry misses the farm he was raised on so decides to buy farm land in Mississippi. He is swindled in the transaction and ends up bringing Laura, their young daughters, and Henry's cruel, racist father to live on a rundown farm in an area of lower class of Whites.

The Jacksons, are black share croppers living on the McAllen farm. Florence is a midwife and her husband, Hap, is the local preacher (his church is only a wood frame with no walls or roof.) Hap sees his small plot of land as a gift from God. Their eldest son, Ronsel, has returned from battling the Germans where he fell in love with a German woman. While highly respected overseas, he returns to a country that refuses to thank him for his service, and especially in the Jim Crow South, treats him with overt prejudice and racism.

An unlikely friendship occurs when Henry's charming brother, Jaime, who served as a fighter pilot with the rank of captain, returns from combat to help on the struggling farm, and meets Ronsel. Ronsel was a sergeant, a tank commander; and despite being very reluctant and cautious about fraternizing with his white neighbor, at Jamie's relentlessly friendly urging, they strike up a friendship that results in horrific consequences. We learn that not only does Jaime feel a military connection to Ronsel, but as a pilot under fire, Jaime owes his life to a red-tailed plane with a dark-skinned pilot who shot down the enemy plane.

The story establishes parallels, similarities, and stark contrasts between the two families: how they perceive the land, Hap with pride and Henry cursing it for its harsh challenges. Florence and Laura form almost a forced bond since Laura has to call upon Florence's nursing skills several times. Dramatic incidents on the farm highlight the tensions and connections between the families providing increasingly deeper insights into each of the characters. It's almost as if these two families could exist side-by-side almost harmoniously, except for the vengeful racist people and societal rules around them. We get a close look at a point in our history when unfair, harmful and absurd restrictions were placed on a specific group of people who were seen as inferior and unworthy by those with notions of powerful superiority.

The cinematography captured the dreary, unrelenting, ominous, despair as the film really took you to that place and time, portraying the deep south in a very personal way through the perceptions and emotions of each character. The nuanced relationships between the characters were extremely interesting. Biased hate is often pitted next to expressions of genuine caring. Some discussion participants thought the tone was a bit like a morality play and felt too many pieces didn't fit together. But for others, the film absolutely held their attention, especially with such strong performances by the ensemble cast.

On our scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best), Mudbound, raised a respectable score of 3.6



See you at the movies!

Adriane Dedic, adedic@pacbell.net

[Film Discussion Group](#) (FDG) organizer