KINONIK

NO WAY OUT (1950)

Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz

WEDNESDAY October 1st 7PM

SATURDAY October 4th 7PM



“Every time anybody dies in a country hospital somebody yells murder.”

“But it’s not the same when they yell it at me.”

Nominated for an Oscar and banned or censored in several cities and states, **No Way Out** (1950) made an impact when it released. Sidney Poitier’s debut came at the tail end of a string of Hollywood flicks attempting to explore racial injustice, some of which are wincingly misguided in retrospect. Yet despite its late arrival on the scene, No Way Out stood above the rest. It was not just an unflinching depiction of racial tension: it was centered on the humanity of its characters, particularly its Black characters. It would be seven years before Poitier got to act in another movie which portrayed the regular, loving home life of his character’s family.

Poitier stars as Dr. Luther, the first Black doctor in a county hospital. His career and life are immediately endangered when two white brothers suffering from gunshot wounds arrive. One brother exhibits strange symptoms, and as Luther attempts to treat him, the man dies under his care. The surviving brother, Ray, immediately cries murder, and refuses to allow the autopsy that would validate Luther’s treatment. The resulting scandal threatens to erupt into town-wide violence; Luther must navigate the impossible, protecting his and his family’s lives while seeking to prove that he did not act in error.

Here we see the foundation of Poitier’s incredible career. Luther carries himself with a dignity that would define many of Poitier’s later roles, but possesses a vulnerability that would rarely be seen elsewhere. There is a clear mirroring, as both Poitier and Luther navigated industries that were hostile to their presence (Poitier both for his race and his refusal to sign McCarthy loyalty pledges)--and with our own time, as seventy-five years later we grapple with continuing bigotry and attempts at censorship. A dramatic, human piece, **No Way Out** still has much to tell us about the wrongs we do to each other and what must be risked to put them right.