



PRE-DRILL CAMP 2026 · LEADERSHIP SEMINARS · DAY 2

Conflict Resolution

"Early. Fair. Direct."

Dr. Thomas L. Jones, Jr.

Director of University Bands · All Leaders, Sunday, August 2, 2026

The Hampton University Marching Force

HAMPTON'S HEARTBEAT

Icebreaker

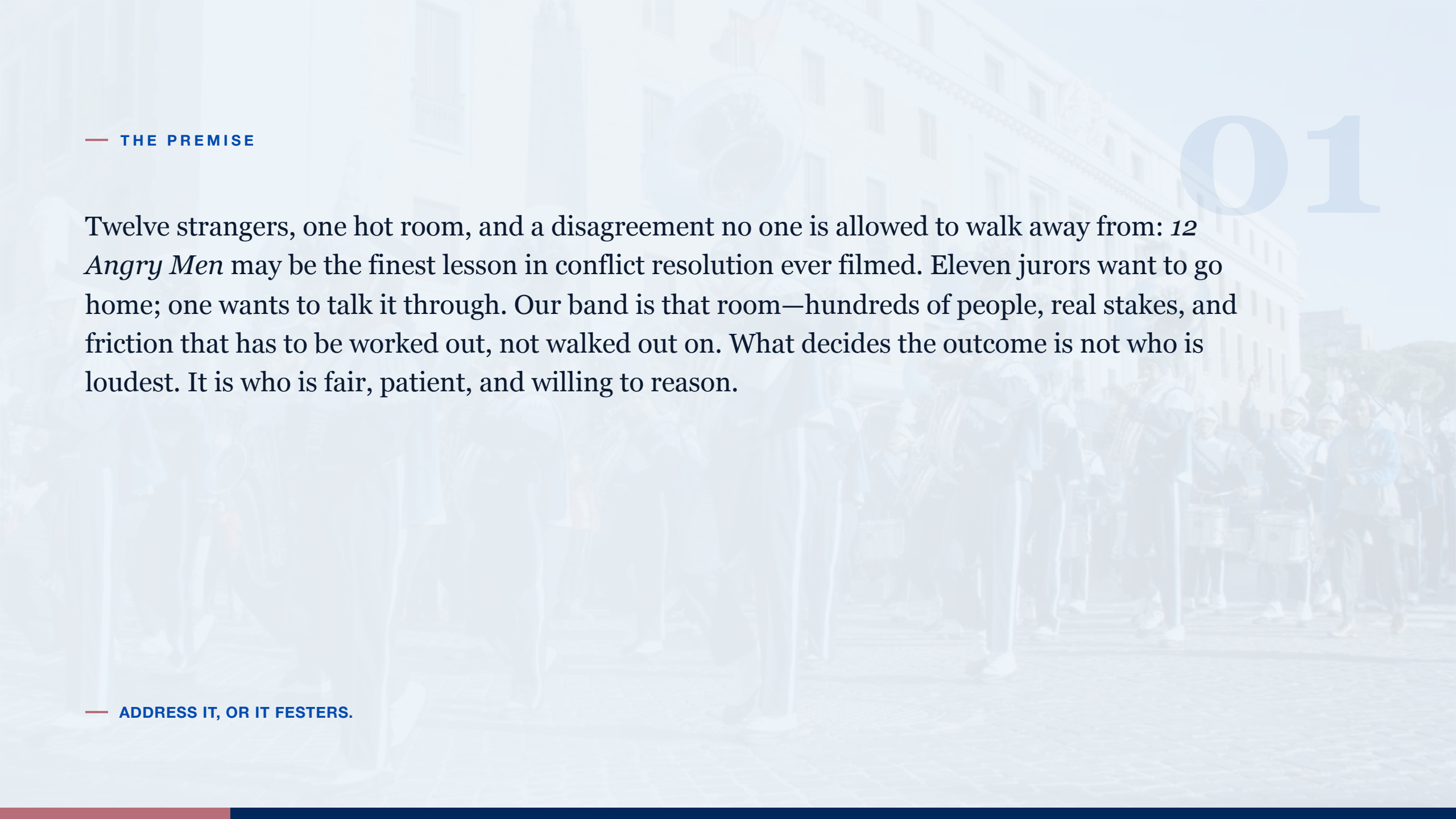
One hot room, twelve jurors, and a boy's life on the line—and the very first vote is eleven to one. Watch what happens when one juror refuses to rush the verdict, and another chooses to actually listen. That jury room is every section you will ever lead.



12 Angry Men — “Who Changed Their Vote?”

youtu.be/EqDdo6GW76o

WATCH · 3:06



— THE PREMISE

01

Twelve strangers, one hot room, and a disagreement no one is allowed to walk away from: *12 Angry Men* may be the finest lesson in conflict resolution ever filmed. Eleven jurors want to go home; one wants to talk it through. Our band is that room—hundreds of people, real stakes, and friction that has to be worked out, not walked out on. What decides the outcome is not who is loudest. It is who is fair, patient, and willing to reason.

— ADDRESS IT, OR IT FESTERS.

Conflict Is Normal

The problem isn't disagreement—it's avoidance.

- ◆ People who spend real time together and care about the outcome **will** disagree. That is a sign of investment, not dysfunction.
- ◆ Conflict handled well makes a team **stronger**—it clears the air, sharpens ideas, and builds trust.
- ◆ Conflict avoided doesn't go away; it goes **underground**—into gossip, resentment, and a section that quietly splits.
- ◆ Your job is not to prevent all conflict. It is to make sure conflict gets **handled**, not buried.

Address It Early

Small problems are cheap to fix. Big ones aren't.

- ◆ Deal with friction while it's still small—a quiet word today beats a blow-up next week.
- ◆ The longer a problem sits, the more it grows: people take sides, stories harden, and trust erodes.
- ◆ Don't hope it "works itself out." Most conflict doesn't—it just waits for the worst possible moment.
- ◆ Early, direct, and private is almost always the right first move.

Positions vs. Interests

People argue what they want. Resolution lives in why.

- ◆ A **position** is what someone demands ("I should get the solo"). An **interest** is the need underneath it—to be seen, to be trusted, to matter.
- ◆ Two positions can be dead opposite while the interests behind them overlap. You can't solve the position; you can often solve the interest.
- ◆ Ask "**why does this matter to you?**" until you reach the real need. That's where a solution both sides accept becomes possible.
- ◆ Fight over positions and someone loses. Solve for interests and both sides can win.

Source: Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes* — interest-based negotiation.

Separate the People From the Problem

Be hard on the issue, soft on the person.

- ◆ Attack the **problem**, not the person. The moment it becomes "you vs. me," resolution stops and defense begins.
- ◆ Put the issue on the table where you can both look at it *together*, side by side, instead of across from each other.
- ◆ Name the behavior and its effect, not the character: "when the rep starts late, we lose time" —not "you're lazy."
- ◆ Protect the relationship while you solve the problem—you still have to stand next to this person tomorrow.

Source: Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes*.

Five Ways People Handle Conflict

Know your default—then choose the right one on purpose.

- ◆ **Competing** (I win): fast and firm—right for emergencies and non-negotiables, costly to relationships.
- ◆ **Avoiding** (walk away): fine for trivial things, dangerous when the issue actually matters.
- ◆ **Accommodating** (you win): builds goodwill when the issue is small to you, breeds resentment when you always fold.
- ◆ **Compromising** (split it): quick and fair-ish, but nobody walks away fully satisfied.
- ◆ **Collaborating** (we both win): the slowest—and the best when the relationship and the outcome both matter.

Source: the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (five conflict-handling modes).

One of Our Core Competencies

Conflict resolution is a skill we deliberately build in every Marching Force leader—a section is only as strong as its ability to work through friction. Before we practice resolving it, watch how fast conflict escalates when it runs unchecked: the anger, the ego, and the pressure boiling over in that same room.



12 Angry Men — When Conflict Boils Over

youtu.be/iLL8OsUN73k

WATCH · 11:35

Seek First to Understand

You can't resolve what you don't understand.

- ◆ Before you fix anything, **listen**—fully, to both sides, without planning your rebuttal while they talk.
- ◆ Acknowledge the feeling before the fact: "I can see this really frustrated you." People settle down once they feel heard.
- ◆ Play it back: "so what I'm hearing is..." It proves you listened and clears up the misreads that fuel conflict.
- ◆ Lower the temperature first. Nobody solves anything while they're still hot.

In the film: Juror 8 never argues louder than anyone else. He asks questions, examines the facts, and truly listens—and one calm, fair voice slowly turns the entire room.

Source: Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* — "seek first to understand, then to be understood."

Stay Fair and Neutral

When you mediate, you belong to no side.

- ◆ When two members are in conflict and you step in, your job is to be **fair**—not to back the person you like more.
- ◆ Hear both sides fully before you form a verdict. Judging early—or being seen to—kills your credibility as a leader.
- ◆ Keep it **private**. Public conflict humiliates people and hardens positions; handle it off to the side.
- ◆ Bring it to the director when it's bigger than you, involves safety, or you're too close to be neutral.

Find the Common Ground

Point everyone back at what they share.

- ◆ Under almost every band conflict is a shared goal: the show, the section, the standard. Name it out loud.
- ◆ Move people from facing **each other** to facing the **same direction**—the thing you're all here to build.
- ◆ "We both want this section to be great" reframes opponents as teammates with a problem to solve.
- ◆ Shared purpose is the strongest tool you have. Use it to turn "me vs. you" into "us vs. the problem."

Get to a Solution, Then Follow Up

A good talk isn't the finish line—a changed situation is.

- ◆ Don't end with feelings vented and nothing decided. Land on something **concrete**: who does what, by when.
- ◆ Make the agreement specific and mutual—both people say out loud what they will do differently.
- ◆ Then **follow up**. Check back in a few days: did it hold? Resolution is a process, not a single conversation.
- ◆ Close the loop on the relationship, too. Once it's settled, let it be settled—no grudges, no scoreboard.

The Conflict Playbook

Four moves, in order, when tension shows up.

1 Go Early

Handle friction while it's small and private, before it hardens and spreads.

3 Stay Fair

Attack the problem, not the person; when you mediate, belong to no side.

2 Listen First

Hear both sides fully, acknowledge the feeling, and find the interest under the position.

4 Move Forward

Land on a concrete agreement, anchor it in the shared goal, and follow up.

YOUR CHARGE

Settle It. Don't Bury It.

That jury walked in eleven to one—certain, angry, ready to go home in five minutes. They walked out with a fair and unanimous verdict, not because anyone shouted the loudest, but because one person refused to rush, asked honest questions, and stayed fair when the room got hot. Conflict is the price of a group that cares. Go at it early, listen for the real need under the argument, stay hard on the problem and soft on the person, and point everyone back at the show you are all here to build. Be the one who turns eleven-to-one into justice.

Serve First. Lead Always. — **Drive the Legacy.**

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