

The Roots of Post-Racial Neoliberalism in Blacklist Era Hollywood

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## **Abstract**

“The Roots of Post-Racial Neoliberalism in Blacklist Era Hollywood” explores the ways that the red scare in Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s helped to transform the politics and culture of American liberalism. By analyzing the discourse of filmmakers, their critics, and that of the industry’s films themselves, it argues that political contests surrounding the meanings of race, ethnicity, class, communism, and Americanness fostered the growth of a new libertarian discourse in the film industry. This libertarian language allowed victims of the entertainment industry blacklist to fight their marginalization by invoking the First Amendment, but it also helped to bring about a “post-racial,” individualistic turn in postwar culture.

This dissertation contributes new insights to the history of liberalism – how ideas about freedom were imagined and pursued – in the second half of the twentieth century. It contends that liberalism, as it was articulated in popular discourse, moved from a language centered around ideas of civil rights to one that centered around ideas of civil liberties. In the film industry in the 1950s, men and women who understood themselves to be on opposite sides of a culture war worked together to shape a common language of freedom. Hollywood thus became a key site in which a larger shift in liberal discourse took place.

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## **Introduction**

During the wartime 1940s in the United States, an unprecedented mobilization of Hollywood film industry writers, directors, producers, and actors worked as a sounding board for New Deal liberalism and its more radical fellow traveling ideologies. Famous names from every major studio organized under the pro-Roosevelt Hollywood Democratic Committee (HDC) including Humphrey Bogart, John Garfield, William Wyler, Lena Horne, John Huston, Bette Davis, Edward G. Robinson, and Orson Welles. These men and women lobbied politicians, threw lavish fundraisers and large public rallies, and published pamphlets in order to fight for the cause of “domestic antifascism.” Hollywood’s activists borrowed the language of domestic antifascism from the larger political movement known as the Popular Front, a loose nationwide coalition of liberals, socialists, and communists. As its name suggests, this rhetoric capitalized upon the wartime environment to make the case for social democratic policy at home. Hollywood’s left-liberals argued for full employment, state protections against discrimination in hiring, and the rights of striking laborers.

The language of domestic antifascism was notable not only for its advocacy of central economic planning and welfare programs, but also for its civil rights platform and for its use of the symbols of race and ethnicity. Understanding matters of race and class to be connected, members of the HDC (later renamed the

Hollywood Independent Citizens Council of Arts, Sciences, and Professions) frequently called for federal anti-lynching legislation, the continuation of the wartime Fair Employment Practices Commission, and often spoke of solidarity among working people, blacks, and Jews. Whereas the most successful cultural products of left-liberals in the thirties elided matters of race and ethnicity, domestic antifascism called for redefining Americanness using racial and ethnic minorities as symbols for cosmopolitan or progressive politics. In films like *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), *Body and Soul* (1947), and *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947), left-liberals in Hollywood made slow but steady progress in bringing the symbols of domestic antifascism to the screen.

Then came the era of the blacklist.<sup>1</sup> Anticomunist sentiment had been growing across American society since prior to the war's end, and in Hollywood, it was facilitated by labor strikes at the studios. In 1947, the House Un-American Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) began investigating alleged communist infiltration of the film industry. In response the heads of the motion picture industry declared that they would not employ known communists. Taking to the radio, director William Wyler warned Americans that films like his own *The Best Years of Our Lives* would no longer be made under such a political climate.<sup>2</sup> And the NAACP civil rights lawyer Thurgood Marshall issued a statement declaring that

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<sup>1</sup> Like other historians of the film industry in the United States, I will employ the shorthand "blacklist" when referring to that of the film industry. For other blacklists of the time, see: Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> "HLYD FIGHTS BACK - (FINAL) - SPOT 27 LIVE," radio script, Oct. 26, 1947, Box 46 f. 596, *William Wyler Papers*, MHL.

the pressure of the red scare would lead to an end to positive portrayals of African Americans on film.<sup>3</sup> Over the next five years, hundreds of film industry workers found that they were unable to work. And the phenomenon of the Hollywood blacklist was echoed in similar campaigns in television, radio, theater, and book publishing. A select few of those blacklisted were able to return the good graces of those policing their respective industries by publicly “naming names.” They delivered the identities of former friends or colleagues that were allegedly involved with supposed “un-American” organizations in order to salvage their own careers.

For all of the personal and political destruction wrought by the blacklist, by the late fifties, liberalism as men and women understood it was back in style. HUAC became a punchline of movies from *Storm Center* (1956) to *Bell, Book, and Candle* (1958). Diverse films from *Guys and Dolls* (1955) to and *Spartacus* (1960) celebrated characters’ refusal to submit the names of others to dangerous figures of authority. The cold war state’s demagoguery was allegorized in popular television shows like *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955-58) and *You Are There* (1953-57). And Thurgood Marshall’s prophecy never came true; African Americans appeared in a range of cinematic roles throughout the fifties. But the language of liberalism that re-emerged in Hollywood was not that of domestic antifascism. It wasn’t even that of Roosevelt’s New Deal liberalism.

Left-liberals in Hollywood adopted the language of civil liberties and individual freedom to defend themselves from the red scare. But as a consensus

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<sup>3</sup> “Says Hollywood Cuts Race Roles; Blames Red Probe,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 25, 1947, 17.



formed around the importance of civil liberties, the themes of libertarianism and individualism replaced those of economic justice and civil rights in the film industry's political culture and in its products. The blacklist's effect in the long term was not simply to shift the politics of the industry – or the country – to the right. Its effect was to contribute to changes in the popular terms of liberalism itself. The top-grossing film of 1947, William Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* invoked a liberal politics that was critical of capitalism and explicitly sought to challenge anti-communist rhetoric. A decade later, the top-grossing film was Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, which invoked a different liberal politics, one that celebrated political freedom as an alternative against totalitarian state rule. Two years later, the most lucrative film was Wyler's own *Ben-Hur* (1959), which mimicked DeMille's film in theme and message, even if it included a scene that condemned naming the names of others to authority figures.<sup>4</sup>

How did the politics of the blacklist era shape the language of liberalism in popular culture, directing it away from the themes of social democracy and towards those of civil liberties and individualism? And how does understanding this change the way in which we think about resistance, agency, and power? This dissertation seeks to answer such questions, and in doing so, to reimagine the cultural history of the entertainment industry blacklist as a genealogy of liberalism.

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<sup>4</sup> Cobbett Steinberg, *Reel Facts: The Movie Book of Records* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 343, 347.

## **The Historiography of the Hollywood Blacklist**

Godfather of American neoliberalism Milton Friedman agreed with future New Left influenced historians on the shameful nature of the red scare in the film industry. “The Hollywood blacklist was an unfree act that destroys [sic] freedom,” the economist declared in his influential 1962 free market manifesto, *Capitalism and Freedom*.<sup>5</sup> Understanding it as a barrier against the natural formation of contracts between individuals, Friedman went as far as to express greater disdain for the blacklist than for the communist ideas of some of its victims.

That there is something remarkable about the fact that Milton Friedman, whom Paul Krugman dubbed “the great popularizer of free market doctrine,” would express the same attitude towards the blacklist as its more progressive critics might not be readily apparent.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, most of the victims of the blacklist – whether they were associated with the Communist Party, or if they simply ascribed to certain left-liberal causes – were critical of the free market. They tended to believe, unlike Friedman, that poverty and social inequality were exacerbated by unregulated capitalism. And they would have disagreed entirely with Friedman’s assertion that racial inequality in the United States has been mitigated by the free market, and that the solution to racism is to be found in market forces and not civil rights

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<sup>5</sup> Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 20.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Krugman, “Who Was Milton Friedman?” *New York Review of Books*, Feb. 15, 2007, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2007/feb/15/who-was-milton-friedman/>. On the influence of Milton Friedman, also see: Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

protections.<sup>7</sup> Even so, none of this means that two parties on disparate ends of an imagined ideological spectrum can't still find one or two things on which they might agree.

What is notable is how the story of the blacklist has conformed to the way that Friedman tells it, as a story in which individual freedom is trampled by a demagogic, imperious state. The literature, I contend, is heavily subject to what I identify as a civil libertarian framework. The language of freedom with which victims of the red scare defended themselves became a kind of hegemonic discourse that shifted the culture of the entertainment industry, particularly among liberals and leftists. The civil libertarian turn not only influenced the filmic language of the fifties, and the language of liberalism more broadly, but it also continued to shape the very historiographic language in which we tell the story of the blacklist itself.

This dissertation differs from previous studies of the blacklist in important respects. Most significantly, it does not presume that the willing and unwilling combatants in the entertainment industry's political contests can be easily divided into teams. This kind of framing is suited to political histories of the blacklist, like Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund's *The Inquisition in Hollywood*. Ceplair and Englund's work is seminal; more recent political histories of the blacklist, including Reynold Humphries's *Hollywood Blacklists* and Michael Freedland's *Hollywood on Trial* have strayed little from their approach.<sup>8</sup> These histories emphasize the labor

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<sup>7</sup> Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 109-111.

<sup>8</sup> Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980); Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood's*

organizing efforts in Hollywood during the 1930s and the strikes of the 1940s, and they stress the role of state institutions in the creation and policing of the red scare in Hollywood.

The dynamics of ideology, discourse, and mass culture production are harder to pin down than those of labor activism and state action, and as a result, there is a greater diversity and divergence among cultural histories of the blacklist era. Because films are mass produced and their content is heavily mediated by the forces of the free market, and because they are the product of multiple artists who must necessarily collaborate and compromise with one another, they are less likely to reveal pure ideological authorial intent than other artistic works. And the major studios were never likely to go out on a radical limb with their film content. Even in the era of the Popular Front, one could find visible radical politics in the novels and plays of the period much more often than in major studio films. Yet it is hard to imagine that the blacklist had no impact on the messages behind American film.

These conflicting notions have fueled much of the debate in and around works like the edited volume *"Un-American" Hollywood*, Andrew Falk's *Upstaging the Cold War*, Nora Sayre's *Running Time*, J. Hoberman's *Army of Phantoms*, Brenda Murphy's *Congressional Theatre*, and John Sbardellati's *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies*, all of which take up the question of how film content changed in the fifties in various ways. For every argument that popular culture became marked by themes of nationalism, anti-communism, gender normativity, and pro-capitalism, others

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*Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Michael Freedland, *Hollywood on Trial: McCarthyism's War Against the Movies* (London: Robson Books, 2007).

point to the success of counter-cultural films like *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), the dramatic increase in films starring African Americans, anti-proliferation films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), and films like *Broken Arrow* (1950) and *Fort Apache* (1948), which complicated the place of American Indians in the history of the American West. Lary May's *The Big Tomorrow* combines quantitative methods with qualitative analysis to demonstrate how the films of the fifties became, on the whole, more conservative. In contrast, Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner's *Hide in Plain Sight* so thoroughly catalogues the "progressive" or "resistant" works of the marginalized left that the blacklist appears to have had little discursive impact at all.<sup>9</sup>

It is my contention that cultural historians would benefit in transitioning beyond the question of whether or not popular culture became more or less conservative during the early cold war, and towards an approach that is more genealogical in nature. The current state of the discourse surrounding American liberalism is rather distinct from that in which the historical actors of the forties and fifties were embedded, and yet the problematic from which historians and

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<sup>9</sup> Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale, Brian Neve, and Peter Stanfield, eds., *"Un-American" Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Andrew Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War: American Dissent and Cultural Diplomacy, 1940-1960* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010); Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York: Dial Press, 1982); J. Hoberman, *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2011); Brenda Murphy, *Congressional Theatre: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood's Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight: The Hollywood Blacklistees in Film and Television, 1950-2002* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

culturalists have been operating has remained largely static. Their approach assumes that the injustices of the red scare era were reversed or neutralized by the insurgent sixties and seventies. In contrast, my project argues that the culture of the blacklist shaped the terms of the cultural and political battles of subsequent decades. It sees understanding the fifties as necessary for understanding cultural shifts in recent more periods, not because of the decade's conservatism, but for its liberalism. The next section elaborates on my proposal that blacklist history be re-centered around the arc of liberalism in the twentieth century.

In addition, this dissertation diverges from blacklist historiography is in its critical approach towards understanding the trope of the "stoolpigeon" or informer that has arisen out of blacklist scholarship and popular memory. The focus on "naming names" that has become central to the popular and scholarly story of the blacklist emerged in the late seventies and early eighties from journalist Victor Navasky's influential *Naming Names*, and from personal remembrances by Lillian Hellman and other blacklist victims. I argue that the trope of "naming names" was constructed by the same cultural forces that helped to shape the civil libertarian turn. That the victims of the entertainment industry's red scare sought a high ground by arguing their case on moralistic terrain reflects the influence of the postwar discourse of individualism on various figures as well as the role of these same figures in shaping this discourse. And the ways that the trope has caught on – in political histories, cultural studies, personal remembrances, and journalistic inquiries – illustrates the degree to which it itself has worked successfully in

shaping the civil libertarian turn in blacklist memory. The continual lure of the trope – evident most recently in Joseph Litvak’s otherwise imaginative work of literary criticism, *The Un-Americans* – might suggest that all of us have become subject, to a degree, to the liberal governing rationalities born in the postwar period.<sup>10</sup> My project largely ignores the function of the act of “naming names” in the history of the blacklist, but in doing so, I hope that it also raises critical concerns over the role that the trope of the “stoolpigeon” has played in the discourse surrounding liberalism and the blacklist.

### **American Liberalism in the 20th Century**

The story of the Hollywood blacklist and the cultural changes that it helped to precipitate is the story of American liberalism in the 20th century. Prior to the 20th century, liberalism functioned as a philosophy that presumed the existence of “natural” rights borne by rational autonomous individuals. As such, liberalism celebrated political liberty and became associated with free market economics. By the twentieth century in the United States, it had also become associated with modern forms of social behavior (as opposed to conservatism), and, particularly after the 1920s, with racial tolerance and welfare capitalism. Arguing that this new form of liberalism was a path to tyranny and economic stagnation, policy makers and economists after World War II slowly turned against the welfare politics of the New Deal era and endorsed deregulation and privatization. By the 1980s,

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<sup>10</sup> Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Viking Press, 1980); Lillian Hellman, *Scoundrel Time* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976); Joseph Litvak, *The Un-Americans: Jews, the Blacklist, and Stoolpigeon Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

neoliberalism – a means of returning to classical liberalism by employing modern methods – had become an identifiable and influential economic movement in both discourse and practice.<sup>11</sup>

Changes in the character of American cultural and political currents – that is, in the nature of liberalism as a practice and in the ways in which it is evoked in language – are not simply the result of a “left” winning or losing a dialectical battle with concentrated capital or with a political “right.” For example, neoliberal ideas gained popular currency and political footing during the so-called “Reagan Revolution,” in which previously identified Democrats, or “liberals,” voted for a Republican not simply because their politics shifted to the “right,” but because of a shift in the language of liberalism and the material and cultural context in which such language is interpreted. The ascent of neoliberal policy makers cannot simply be explained by “false consciousness” or by singling out superstructural institutions.

Historians have begun to catalog and analyze the changes in liberal thought that have occurred in the decades since the postwar red scare. For example, in *The 1970s*, Thomas Borstelmann contends that the eponymous decade, and by extension the period that follows, is marked by a trend in which social equality became increasingly accepted while economic equality became increasingly undesirable and economic mobility became increasingly impossible. The language of liberalism turned individualistic in multiple ways: individuality and non-conformity coincided

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<sup>11</sup> On the history of liberalism, see: Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 8-10; Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 5-6. On the history of neoliberalism, see: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Burgin, *The Great Persuasion*; Jones, *Masters of the Universe*.



with relaxed positions on race and gender on one hand, but on the other hand, individualism also coincided with a decreased sense of shared social purpose and responsibility. In another synthesis on late 20th century liberal thought, *Age of Fracture*, Daniel Rodgers identifies this trend as the result in the rise of an organized libertarian intellectual movement, a “junction point where left-wing and right-wing utopianism met.”<sup>12</sup>

I contend that Hollywood in the blacklist era is one of many sites where the language of liberalism first began to shift following World War II. And it is this same shift that diminishes the utility of our previous understandings of the blacklist; to see the problems of an embattled left-liberalism in the entertainment industry as simply one in the long line of contests between the left and the right is to ignore the nature of the trajectory of liberalism, the role of leftist and liberal discourse in shaping this trajectory, and the degree to which historians and cultural critics remain subject to static visions of the cleavages in American culture.

Specifically, I argue that the events of the Hollywood blacklist precipitated the proliferation of a language of civil liberties in industry discourse, and the increase in themes of individualism onscreen. Traditional histories of the postwar red scare in the United States contend that a civil libertarian left ultimately triumphed over an anti-civil libertarian right, but this project suggests that out of the period emerges a kind of civil libertarian consensus. Cold warriors cited civil

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 188.

liberties as something that separated the enlightened West from the subjugated East, and various liberals and leftists also relied on civil libertarian arguments to combat the demagoguery of the culture of McCarthyism. But in the long run, the dominance and uncontested nature of civil libertarian language promoted a brand of individualistic thought and hindered social democratic solutions to societal problems. To put it rather simply, the nascent lexicon of civil libertarianism of the fifties and sixties facilitated the libertarianism of the seventies and subsequent decades that Borstelmann and Rodgers have identified. While civil libertarianism has the potential to suit multiple aims and causes, it ultimately gave fuel to an emerging neoliberal culture. In this context, the Hollywood blacklist can be understood less as a “shameful” period that was undone and neutralized by the social movements of the sixties and the seventies. Instead, this project shows how the discourses that emerged out of the blacklist era anticipated and influenced broad cultural trends that historians are locating in the 1970s.

Neoliberalism works not only as a governing rationality of political economy, but also as a set of cultural norms and expectations that reorient everyday life. Its penetration into mainstream discourse has not only resulted in the legitimization of policies that, as David Harvey notes in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, have restored and renewed “class power,” but it has also “become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world.”<sup>13</sup> As Harvey suggests, because of the symbolic power of the language of freedom and culture of

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<sup>13</sup> Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3, 31.

individualism in the United States, neoliberalism is not simply a political problem, but a cultural one.<sup>14</sup> Borstelmann offers an example in which the turn towards individualism has led to the erosion of the public sphere in matters as mundane and quotidian as the ways in which we listen to music, sealed off from one another in individual sonic spheres contained by iPod headphones.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout these pages, I will make an important distinction between civil rights and civil liberties in order to argue that in the postwar era, language of the latter overtakes that of the former, particularly among leftists and those who identified as liberals. In doing so, I am using these two concepts in a manner that is more specific in nature than they have been otherwise deployed. Civil liberties are protections for individuals against the threat of state power. For example, “freedom of speech” is a civil liberty that protects individuals from a state which might move to silence an individual. Civil rights are protections that are extended by the state, and directed against other individuals or private entities. In other words, the enforcement of civil rights generally requires action on behalf of the state, while the maintenance of civil liberties requires the state to be restrained. They are by no means mutually exclusive, and they have been deployed together in the pursuit of certain goals, which helps to explain why they have often been conflated.

My research suggests that differentiating the histories of civil rights movements and discourses from those of civil liberties – and marking the ways in which they have worked both cooperatively and antagonistically – is an avenue

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 39-40.

<sup>15</sup> Borstelmann, *The 1970s*, 125.

worthy of further in-depth study. Laura Weinrib's recent work on the legal history of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is promising in this regard. Weinrib finds a shift in the organization's goals and strategies in the interwar period, in which the organization moved from a perspective that saw civil liberties as a means to an end of securing civil rights for laborers and racial minorities, to a perspective that understood civil liberties as a worthy end in itself.<sup>16</sup> This interwar shift, and the legal victories for civil libertarians that ensued, "gave rise to an individualist language," Weinrib argues.<sup>17</sup> My work shows the ways in which the Hollywood blacklist aided the postwar dissemination of the ideas that were rooted in the earlier legal strategies of the ACLU.

A final note on terminology: For purposes of clarity and readability, I have chosen to adopt the term "left-liberal" when referring to the broad coalition that organized during the mid-to-late 1930s through the end of World War II. Left-liberals may or may not have considered themselves "New Dealers," members of the Popular Front, progressives, socialists, and/or liberals. They may or may not have been communists, anti-communists, or "fellow travelers." Wherever possible, I have tried to use more specific language, but it is nevertheless important to note that these categories were fluid, and in the era of the Popular Front, they mattered little to those who looked hopefully to the meetings of various organizations in the pursuit of grand causes. (To others, the categories provoked fierce sectarian

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<sup>16</sup> Laura Weinrib, "The Sex Side of Civil Liberties: *United States v. Dennett* and the Changing Face of Free Speech," *Law and History Review* 30, no. 2 (May 2012), 383.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 386. For more on the ACLU, see also: Judy Kutulas, *The American Civil Liberties Union and the Making of Modern Liberalism, 1930-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

debate.) After the onset of the postwar red scare, and particularly after 1948, to talk about a left-liberal movement in the United States makes somewhat less sense. This is not to say, however, that individuals did not continue to have political beliefs or worldviews that crossed the ideological boundaries which had become more visibly demarcated and policed by the red scare.<sup>18</sup>

### **Race and Ethnicity in Postwar Political Culture**

Race and ethnicity have long been integral to conceptions and articulations of American liberalism, and they have similarly found their way into stories of the blacklist. Too often, though, the symbolic language of race has been interpreted largely as constitutive of proxies for the political ideologies of the parties at conflict. For example, conventional wisdom dictates that if communists in the film industry were necessarily pro-civil rights, their expressions of such beliefs inevitably factored into their blacklisting, and furthermore, their blacklisting necessitated a handicap to the progress of civil rights in the industry, because their antagonists, being necessarily anti-civil rights, were against progressive film content and worked in the blacklist era to prevent its production.

This tidy set of alignments has more than a ring of truth, but it belies more complicated ways in which ideas about race and ethnicity have fed, legitimized, and

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<sup>18</sup> Doug Rossinow has recently made a claim for the appropriateness of speaking of a “left-liberal” coalition in the context of the first half of the twentieth century. He also cautions us against conflating “left” and “liberal” political currents when speaking of the last few decades. Such rhetorical conflation, he notes, is often employed strategically by the political right. Doug Rossinow, “Partners for Progress? Liberals and Radicals in the Long Twentieth Century,” in *Making Sense of American Liberalism*, eds. Jonathan Bell and Timothy Stanley (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 17-37.

challenged various ideas and practices of liberalism over the century. Here my work is largely influenced by the important scholarship that revised the relationship between the cold war and the civil rights movement that began emerging with Mary Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights* and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's lecture, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." In these and works by Robin Kelley, Glenda Gilmore, and others, historians have differentiated between the liberal goals of the civil rights movement, which were aided by the United States' concern that it win the hearts and minds of international onlookers, and the concerns of more progressive civil rights activists whose voices were often silenced.<sup>19</sup> In critiques of racial liberalism, racial justice is exposed as not an end in itself for all of those involved in making policy or constructing discourse. For certain historical actors, it worked as a fulcrum towards attempting to realize visions of liberalism or empire.<sup>20</sup> Nancy MacLean describes this as the cost of "diversity"; "what was being valued was not the righting of injustice," she states, but the discovery of "how institutions might prosper by opening their gates."<sup>21</sup> Most

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91 no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263; Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008). Also see: Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement: "Another Side of the Story"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Risa Goluboff, *The Lost Promise of Civil Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> See: Melani McAlister, "A Virtual Muslim is Something to Be," *American Quarterly* 62 no. 2 (June 2010), 225; Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 320.

recently, the discourse of racial liberalism has been joined by what I've termed post-racial neoliberalism, a view that understands America's racial problems to be wholly in the past. For advocates of the free market, the discourse of a post-racial United States coincides usefully with more general conceptions of the country as a land of opportunity and equality, and thus might be levied against those who seek redistributive solutions to social inequality, particularly where that inequality is exacerbated by matters of race. Historians of the "long civil rights movement" have alerted us to the degree to which it is constituted by diverse and disparate elements. Arguing for a specific understanding of "civil rights" per se, my project contributes to this discussion by questioning the degree to which certain civil rights actors at specific moments were in fact engaged in a fight for civil rights at all.

Just as cold war exigencies allowed racial liberalism to flourish, the cold war similarly shaped the trajectory of American Jewish politics. The culture of anticommunism – in spite of and because of alleged links between American Jews and communism – facilitated the growth of discourses that promoted Jews as part of a Judeo-Christian coalition that might be understood as a bulwark against communism. Scholars in American Jewish history, including Peter Novick, Stuart Svonkin, and Michael Staub, have investigated the ways that Jewish organizations came to articulate certain liberal ideas that would allow them to find a comfortable place in postwar society. These liberal organizations were justifiably pleased with the progress of American society in adopting more tolerant attitudes towards Jews, and sought to combat lingering anti-Semitism and protect their newly gained status.

But the price of their comfort was the need to carefully navigate the politics of the postwar era, limiting any actions that might incite charges of un-Americanism.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly the vast majority of Jews thought little of how their rising social and economic status were implicated in political webs of utility and ideology. But in the film industry, where Jews had been historically targeted by anti-Semites wary of their allegedly “alien” influence in popular culture, Jews within the industry, aided by liberal Jewish organizations, sought to employ the language of race and ethnicity much as liberal cold warriors did elsewhere, as a fulcrum for expressing anti-communist liberal ideology. This meant articulating a deep faith in the institutions of the United States and the values they were alleged to promote, a belief in capitalism, and an understanding that progress in racial tolerance would come through individualistic means. Their brand of racial liberalism was more likely to celebrate causes of civil liberties than civil rights.<sup>23</sup>

Other Jews had embarked on a different project in the thirties and forties. For Popular Front organizations in the 1940s, race and class intersected in ways of which left-liberal Jews eager to make trans-racial alliances appeared to be

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). On Jews and race, also see: Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> For more on anti-Semitism in Hollywood, see Steven Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History Up to World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For more on Jewishness and American liberalism, see Beth Wenger, *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Tony Michels, “Is America ‘Different’?: A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism,” *American Jewish History* 96, no. 3 (Sept. 2010): 201-224.



particularly cognizant. Left-liberal Jews were invested in projects that emphasized social democracy and civil rights, and they identified with the populations below them in ethno-social hierarchy. Their voices were increasingly silenced and marginalized by more moderate liberal Jews during the events of the red scare. The postwar period was not the first time that radical or progressive activists were challenged by more moderate reformers, but for both blacks and Jews, the red scare ushered in a purge of leftist individuals from prominent civil rights organizations. The 1940s Popular Front language of domestic antifascism was increasingly understood as toxic to the racial liberals of the fifties.<sup>24</sup> Among those working in the film industry, Jewishness as a discourse moved from a cornerstone of Popular Front antifascism to a key element of anticommunism, and in the process, it transformed from being critically race-conscious to strategically colorblind. My work shows how in the context of the blacklist, diverse actors in Hollywood contributed to the emergence of the dominant “cold war civil rights” paradigm of the postwar period, and it argues that the popular culture of the entertainment industry worked to reify the discourses of racial liberalism that articulated moderate, class-blind reforms to the problems of racial inequality.

### **Freedom and Governance**

In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey argues that the political movements of the left during the sixties and seventies “failed to recognize or

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<sup>24</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 159-60; George Sanchez, “What’s Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews’: Creating Multiracialism on the Eastside during the 1950s,” *American Quarterly* 56 no. 3 (Sept. 2004):633-661; Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement”, 1250-51.

confront, let alone transcend, the inherent tension between the quest for individual freedoms and social justice.”<sup>25</sup> The generation of activists that were reckoning with Vietnam, Watergate, and COINTELPRO subsequently brought their concerns, biases, and subjectivities into the academy, where Wendy Brown argued in 2006 that there exists an “intellectual hangover” among those thinkers who remain subject to “an episteme in which power was figured as unified, systematic, and purposeful.”<sup>26</sup> Governmentality studies, a body of literature that has emerged out of the scholarship of Michel Foucault, offer a useful theoretical basis for nursing this malady.

In particular, Nikolas Rose’s *Powers of Freedom* works effectively towards deconstructing the ways in which freedom has been invoked in social movements and in intellectual discourse.<sup>27</sup> For Nikolas Rose, the power of liberal governance is partially located in the very language that repudiates the modern state: that of freedom. Freedom, he argues, is best understood in a contemporary context not as a state of nature, he argues, but instead as a technology of governance.

Although governmentality is an analytical frame that might illuminate the way that power works in a diverse range of societies, Foucault, Rose, and others, have understood it to be particularly useful in explaining the postwar emergence of

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<sup>25</sup> Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization,” *Political Theory* 34 no. 6 (Dec. 2006), 691.

<sup>27</sup> Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For more on governmentality, see Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008); Jack Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy, eds., *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

neoliberalism. Governmentality levies a useful charge against what Michel Foucault has termed “state phobia,” a rationality that has become endemic to post-Watergate era scholarship and cultural criticism.<sup>28</sup> According to the theory of governmentality, governance originates and is practiced beyond the formal structures of the state. Discourses – sets of statements and/or practices that convey meaning – function as “technolog[ies] of thought” which work to craft the conduct of citizens.<sup>29</sup> The liberal state is where the governing function of certain discourses are made most intelligible, but are not necessarily where they originate. To be clear, governmentality does not suggest that state institutions are necessarily benign or that autocratic rule is favorable to liberal governance. Sociologist Mitchell Dean, alluding to a Michel Foucault quote, claims that governance is neither inherently good nor bad, but always “dangerous.”<sup>30</sup> An intellectual approach informed by governmentality does not suggest that we ignore the state, but that we look outside of it to find ways in which its power is born, legitimized, circulated, limited, and challenged.

Relatedly, historian James Livingston’s evocation of pragmatist philosophy coincides usefully, from my perspective, with other arguments that seek to complicate criticisms of the modern state. Over several books, Livingston has laid out a forceful critique of the New Left influenced historical scholarship on twentieth century liberalism. Just as Dean caustically chastises the academy’s “relentless talk

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<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 187-8.

<sup>29</sup> Rose and Miller, *Governing the Present*, 29.

<sup>30</sup> Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 198.

about recovering agency,” Livingston critiques contemporary scholars for maintaining a brand of anti-capitalism that he sees as backwards-looking, individualistic, and producerist, stuck in an 1890s populist moment that celebrates individualism and privileges an autonomous model of the self.<sup>31</sup> Livingston stops short of articulating an understanding of the libertarian left as producing discourses that govern. But he does argue for a Gramscian understanding of cultural politics that conceives of a “dispersal of power” which requires in response a model of the “social self” promoted by John Dewey, whose claim that “individuality is not originally given” suggests a futility in chasing classically liberal models in which society is composed by free thinking, “natural rights” bearing individuals.<sup>32</sup>

In the eyes of Rose, Dean, and Livingston, a presumably leftist perspective that seeks to recover the costs of capitalism by pursuing freedom from the modern state is flawed and unimaginative. Such a perspective represents what Rose and Dean would identify as subjectivity to a liberal governmentality, and what Livingston would cite as an outdated model of the self. And from the perspective of adherents to libertarian or neoliberal ideologies, such an approach isn’t leftist or critical of capitalism at all. And yet over the last half a century, the arc of liberalism – that which once leaned towards greater social welfare – has now bent towards such perspectives, dominating the visions of the left. My work argues that

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 168; James Livingston, *Against Thrift: Why Consumer Culture is Good for the Economy, the Environment, and Your Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 4-7. See also: James Livingston, *Pragmatism, Feminism, and Democracy: Rethinking the Politics of American History* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1-2, 81.

<sup>32</sup> Livingston, *Pragmatism, Feminism, and Democracy*, 9-10, 18.

Hollywood is one site in which the postwar language of freedom was incubated and circulated, in politics designated “right” as well as “left,” and that this language formed part of the nascent governing discourse that we now identify as neoliberalism.

### **Chapters That Follow**

The postwar entertainment industry blacklist in the United States encompasses far too many stories to be told in a single work of scholarship. This study examines four cases in which, I argue, the politics of the blacklist played a role in the construction of a particular turn in American liberal discourse. In each of these stories, various actors adopted civil libertarian rhetoric and thus contributed to a long term trend in the United States towards more libertarian rhetoric, culture, and governance.

That civil libertarianism would become the prime cause of the cold war left was not a foregone conclusion in the immediate postwar years. The first chapter of this dissertation surveys the political culture of the wartime entertainment industry in Los Angeles. During World War II, the film industry’s writers, directors, and actors participated en masse in the left-liberal political movement that had started in the mid-1930s, known as the Popular Front. They engaged in critically race-conscious activities such as endorsing the Fair Employment Practices Committee and raising money for the young Mexican American men on trial in the Sleepy Lagoon murder case. The chapter illustrates the role of the onset of the red scare in Hollywood in disrupting the movement’s characteristic language of “domestic

antifascism,” which framed the social problems of the United States in terms of race and class, and which sought federal, New Deal style solutions to social problems. It concludes by analyzing two of the most successful films to translate Popular Front Hollywood ideas to the screen, 1947’s *Gentleman’s Agreement* and *Body and Soul*.

The second chapter follows the career of arguably the most powerful liberal in Hollywood, Dore Schary, during his tenure as the Vice President in Charge of Production at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios from 1948 to 1956. Dore Schary had been an active member of Hollywood’s Popular Front organizations, and after the blacklist era was initiated in 1947, he was continually red-baited. As he continued to make films in the fifties, he struggled to negotiate the boundaries between anti-communist, liberal, and communist. Particularly with respect to his films that dealt with matters of race and ethnicity, Schary’s story reveals the ways in which liberal attempts to adopt some of the themes of Popular Front antifascism were circumscribed by the trend away from a social democratic political culture and towards a civil libertarian one.

The third chapter examines the work of a handful of blacklisted writers that were able to write clandestinely for television throughout the fifties. These writers, many of them communists, understood their work to constitute a form of “resistance” against the anticommunist cold war culture that had resulted in their industry exile. Closely analyzing three shows, *You Are There*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, and *The Buccaneers*, I argue that the writers’ work constituted part of a nascent libertarian discourse that, while certainly anti-McCarthy, also contributed to

an emerging postwar lexicon that coincided with sentiment that was anti-New Deal and anti-social democracy.

The fourth chapter finds the language of civil libertarianism in the public memory of the blacklist itself. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the twenty-first century, Hollywood films including *The Front*, *Guilty by Suspicion*, and *The Majestic* have paid tribute to the liberal and leftist victims of the postwar red scare in the entertainment industry. But they have done so, I argue, in ways that utilize the civil libertarian language that became increasingly prevalent in political and popular culture because of the cold war. In the process, they have put forth messages that in some ways work at cross purposes to the politics of those to which they appear to pay tribute.

The American entertainment industry didn't invent civil libertarianism, libertarianism, or neoliberalism. But the story of the blacklist, taken as a genealogy of liberalism rather than a narrative of dialectical struggle for political freedom, has much to reveal about the evolution of these intellectual and cultural movements, offering a possible explanation as to why the politics of the sixties and seventies unfolded as David Harvey observes. In this story, diverse interests coincided in their adoption of civil libertarian language, while forces coalesced to suppress the democratic socialist language of the wartime left-liberal coalition. The historical project to uncover the contingencies behind the dominant language of neoliberalism offers us lessons in understanding the present subjectivities behind expressions of "freedom" which originate from the contemporary right as well as the libertarian-

influenced left, and also from those entertainment industry workers who are simply speaking what has become the normative language of popular culture. We'll start by examining the language of one of Hollywood's most iconic voices of the forties, that of film star Humphrey Bogart.



## **Chapter One: Bogey's Choice: The Collapse of Hollywood's Second Popular Front and the Decline of American Anti-Fascist Discourse**

"Some friends sent me a mounted fish and underneath it was written: 'If I hadn't opened my big mouth, I wouldn't be here.'" So began Humphrey Bogart's lengthy, self-deprecating plea in the March 1948 issue of *Photoplay* to his critics, those who had been calling him a communist after he traveled to Washington, D.C. the previous autumn to advocate for the Committee for the First Amendment. Even though he had traveled to Washington with a number of other film industry luminaries like John Huston, Danny Kaye, Paul Heinreid, and Bogart's wife Lauren Bacall, Bogart became the center of attention.<sup>1</sup> The Committee's emissaries to the national capital had become known as "Bogart's group," in reference to which Bogart joked, "top billing became embarrassing."<sup>2</sup> After returning from the trip, Bogart distanced himself from the Committee for the First Amendment and spent months defending himself in press releases and guest editorials.<sup>3</sup>

John Huston and William Wyler, both Hollywood directors, formed the Committee for the First Amendment in response to the news in 1947 that the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) had taken up an investigation of

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial: The Story of the 10 Who Were Indicted* (New York: Boni & Gaer, 1948), 140.

<sup>2</sup> Humphrey Bogart, "I'm No Communist," *Photoplay*, March 1948, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Humphrey Bogart, press release, December 3, 1947, box 123 folder 1584, John Huston Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles (hereafter cited as JH-MHL).

possible communist infiltration of the film industry.<sup>4</sup> Although Congress opened up the investigation at the behest of the anti-communist Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, which included actors like Ronald Reagan, there was a fairly broad consensus in Hollywood that the investigation of the industry would only prove detrimental to the business of making movies.<sup>5</sup> But after two weeks of HUAC hearings in November 1947, this consensus fell apart. Although the Committee for the First Amendment continued to operate into 1948, its popularity was ephemeral. And although Hollywood would be shaken much more turbulently in 1951, when HUAC began a second round of investigations into alleged Communist influence in the industry, the blacklisting and imprisonment of those “unfriendly” witnesses that appeared before HUAC in the second week of its 1947 investigation initiated an era of fear and self-censorship in the movie-making industry.

Bogart’s comments to the press that followed his return, that his trip was “foolish and impetuous” and “ill-advised,” set a tone and a precedent for how Hollywood liberals would respond to the anti-communist politics of the blacklist era.<sup>6</sup> We can understand the shift in tone as marking the collapse of Hollywood’s second “Popular Front,” its political coalition of anti-fascist liberals and leftists, that had began after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. (The first Popular Front period was in the 1930s, and was similarly oriented around the New Deal,

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<sup>4</sup> William Wyler, letter draft, March 9, 1956, box 46 folder 596, William Wyler Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles (hereafter cited as WW-MHL).

<sup>5</sup> “In Fact,” manuscript, box 46 folder 598, WW-MHL.

<sup>6</sup> Humphrey Bogart, press release, Dec. 3, 1947, Box 123 folder 1584, JH-MHL.

social democracy, and “industrial unionism.”<sup>7</sup>) But more importantly, the shift set the bounds of discourses of liberalism and Americanism, of civil rights and civil liberties, which would manifest in the films of cold war Hollywood. The Committee for the First Amendment would continue to rally for the right of all Americans to say what they feel without fear. But Hollywood’s activists and auteurs turned away from particular Popular Front rhetoric, and replaced it with a new kind of liberal lexicon. This new language was not necessarily anti-communist, anti-labor, or pro-capital. But it discarded civil and economic rights and championed a civil libertarianism, framing it as the answer to the threat of totalitarianism, which could be commonly understood as the chief threat to American freedom by the most vocal actors across the political spectrum. For those with ties to the left, the invocation of the first amendment retained a tinge of red – employing it certainly didn’t do Bogart any favors – but it was far safer than invoking Popular Front tenets of racial and economic social justice.

In short, I argue that the red scare in Hollywood precipitated a broad discursive shift on the part of the film industry’s politically active, one that moved from civil rights to civil liberties. The distinction between the two deserves some elucidation. Civil liberties are commonly and historically conceived as the protection of individual action against state intervention, and civil rights as the protections provided by the state against the actions of individuals, corporations, or market forces. Closely related to the importance of distinguishing the two is the

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), xvii.

matter of untangling “political freedom” from what Progressives termed “economic freedom,” where proponents of the former see oppression and injustice as being rooted in autocratic centralized government, and proponents of the latter see it as originating from concentrated capital. Note that while making hard analytical distinctions between these concepts is key to my central claims, ideas about civil rights, civil liberties, and “freedom” are more often than not conflated with one another. I employ them as separate categories not because my subjects do so, but precisely because they do not. Also important to note, these principles are by no means mutually exclusive.

In order to understand the way that the shift towards civil liberties imposed limits on how representations of race, ethnicity, class, and Americanness were projected on film screens in the blacklist era, the subject of subsequent chapters, it is useful to investigate the circumstances around which the politics and the language of Hollywood anti-fascism evolved in the mid to late 1940s. Occasionally foolish and impetuous, to be sure, Hollywood’s stars, directors and writers nevertheless worked actively within and outside of their occupations to advance anti-fascist causes in the years during and immediately after the United States’ participation in World War II. But after the November 1947 HUAC hearings, those who survived the initial fallout would become much more reticent to open their “big mouths,” even as free speech tenuously became the cause of both Hollywood liberals and radicals.

The Hollywood Ten, as the “unfriendly witnesses” of that November became known, rankled the members of HUAC with their counter-accusations of the committee. When asked if they were or were not associated with the Communist Party, they insisted on their Constitutional right to free association, and furthermore, they accused HUAC of trying to impose a new kind of Americanism centered around militarism and an exclusionary brand of nationalism. Such backtalk is what Bogart and other Hollywood liberals cited as their reason for their distrust of the Ten after the hearings were over.<sup>8</sup> Historians have followed, without examining too closely the shifts in discursive patterns that would define Bogart and other liberals’ reactions to the Ten’s testimony. Other historians, like scriptwriters of their own Hollywood movies, have repeatedly seized upon the courtroom drama of November of 1947 to write suitable crescendos to explorations of Hollywood politics, most of which uncover the degree to which labor organizing factored into HUAC’s decision to investigate the film industry.<sup>9</sup> By seeing 1947 as a watershed, rather than a denouement – a phenomenon that historian Andrew Falk calls the ““And the Hollywood Ten went to prison”” ending – I hope to make clear the means

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<sup>8</sup> Dore Schary, *Heyday* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 161.

<sup>9</sup> Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Stephen Vaughn, “Political Censorship During the Cold War: The Hollywood Ten” in *Movie Censorship and American Culture*, ed. Francis Couvares (Washington: Smithsonian University Press, 1996), 237-257; John Gladchuk, *Hollywood and Anticommunism: HUAC and the Evolution of the Red Menace, 1935-1950* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Gerald Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950: Moguls, Mobsters, Stars, Reds, & Trade Unionists* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Gerald Horne, *The Final Victim of the Hollywood Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

by which the birth of the Hollywood blacklist served in altering the tenor of filmmaking.<sup>10</sup>

To the extent that those in film studies have weighed in on the politics of post-HUAC films and filmmaking, they have tended to limit themselves to the question of whether or not progressive or radical messages could be produced during the blacklist era; in other words, they argue over whether or not movies shifted “to the right.” This scholarship is exemplified by the recent edited volume, *“Un-American” Hollywood*.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, historians such as Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner have worked towards uncovering the hidden ways in which blacklisted filmmakers worked clandestinely to make fifties movies somehow more radical.<sup>12</sup> Here and in further chapters, I intend to complicate the distinctions between left and right, and trouble the usage of characterizations like “liberal” as static terms, particularly as they operated in Hollywood.<sup>13</sup> In this case, to designate the language of civil liberties as either “left” or “right” would be to miss the ways that it worked both for and against disparate interests.

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War: American Dissent and Cultural Diplomacy, 1940-1960* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 178. For an exception to the rule, also see: Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Frank Krutnik, et al., *“Un-American” Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight: The Hollywood Blacklistees in Film and Television, 1950-2002* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *Blacklisted: The Film-Lover’s Guide to the Hollywood Blacklist* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> I join others already drawing attention to the “protean character” of American liberalism, for example: Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Gary Gerstle, “The Protean Character of American Liberalism,” *American Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (Oct. 1994): 1043-1073.

Humphrey Bogart and others made a choice to break with the radicals in Hollywood, but he didn't name names. He wasn't a rat fink or a stool pigeon. Studies of the entertainment industry blacklist that focus on the moral dilemma of "naming names," which only became central to the politics of the blacklist after 1951, elide the messiness of the era by taking subjectivity and culture out of the equation, and by reducing politics down to individual choice and moral character.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, I would argue that they miss the very political and hegemonic exigencies by which these narratives of morality have come to be so popular. In turn, works that frame studies of the blacklist in arguments about moral high grounds have beckoned responses from more reactionary historians, who have argued that if the blacklisting of the entertainment industry was not an altogether noble set of events, it was justified not only because communism *was* a threat, but because the communists in Hollywood were not altruistic figures; they frequently attacked one another for deviating from Stalinist doctrine and otherwise worked in undemocratic ways.<sup>15</sup> Here, I am less interested in the personal politics and moral quandaries of the period, or the moral character of those who found themselves targets of the red scare, than I am in the ways that their victimization led to changes in the ways that Americanism would be defined in the industry's various forms of expression.

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<sup>14</sup> Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York, Viking, 1980); Joseph Litvak, *The Un-Americans: Jews, the Blacklist, and Stoolpigeon Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Ronald Radosh and Allis Radosh, *Red Star over Hollywood: The Film Colony's Long Romance with the Left* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2005); Alan Casty, *Communism in Hollywood: The Moral Paradoxes of Testimony, Silence, and Betrayal* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009).

Such an investigation elucidates the degree to which definitions of Americanness were, and continue to be, in flux. Whereas during the war years, the heterogeneity of America's fighting forces were held up as superior to Germany and Japan's supposedly automatic soldiers, to point out such difference as a means to argue for cultural pluralism, anti-discrimination, or civil and economic rights after 1947 would be, in no uncertain terms, un-American.<sup>16</sup> During the red scare, Jews, African Americans, and other racial and ethnic groups would again be enlisted by Hollywood to wage a discursive war against hostile, alien, and "un-American" forces. But the assumptions that surrounded their societal roles and their claims to civil rights would be markedly different than those in the era of the second Popular Front. If it is certainly true that civil liberties were historically central to the battles of organized labor in Hollywood and elsewhere across the country, they also became part of a postwar discursive web that would entangle and contain the anti-fascist civil rights language of the Popular Front.

This chapter will explore how leftists and liberals in Hollywood, those who had found company in one another in the war-time Popular Front coalition, became tripped up in discourses of Americanness in the autumn of 1947. As alliances fractured, an anti-fascist discourse that, seeing the relationship between race and class, promoted a social democratic civil rights ideology transformed into one that was marked by post-racial, individualistic and civil libertarian rhetoric. In tracing Popular Front thought and expression, this study considers the realm of Hollywood

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<sup>16</sup> Jennifer E. Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire: Adrian Scott and the Politics of Americanism in 1940s Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 48-49.



as both a place where filmic texts circulate in movie theaters around the country, and also as a place with a particular physical geographical location where discourse is constituted and practiced inside and outside of film production. It takes the position that films are products both of a culture industry and of individual authors, who are themselves subject to a multitude of ideologies that are historically and geographically contingent. Accordingly, the chapter begins by locating the Popular Front practice of wartime anti-fascist discourse predominantly in the local politics of Los Angeles, before finding it in analyses of the 1947 films *Gentlemen's Agreement* and *Body and Soul*, perhaps the most fully realized popular filmic articulations of the ideas of the left during the years of the second Popular Front.

### **Domestic Anti-Fascist Activity in Los Angeles**

The Second Popular Front in the United States began when Franklin Roosevelt declared war on Japan in 1941. American Communists, including film industry workers in the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, had been in the precarious position of having to defend the Soviet Union's alliance with Adolf Hitler. In an about face from the interventionist stance that the American left took for much of the 1930s during Hitler's rise to power, they argued that American intervention in World War II would only be imperialistically motivated.<sup>17</sup> But beginning in December 1941, when the United States government wholly embraced anti-fascism six months after Germany's sudden invasion of the Soviet Union, Hollywood liberals,

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<sup>17</sup> Hollywood Anti-Nazi League File, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Communists, and “fellow travelers” alike pledged to support their country’s war effort, either by fighting overseas, or, in the case of Hollywood, by making movies that would rally Americans towards the war effort.<sup>18</sup>

The Communist Party in the United States was headed by General Secretary Earl Browder, who had implemented the original Popular Front directive in the mid-1930s. The Popular Front in reality existed far beyond the Communist Party, however. Michael Denning cites the Congress of Industrial Organizations, a federation of trade unions, as the locus of Popular Front politics. And the culture of the Popular Front existed in an array of intellectual and artistic circles, and included such diverse influential actors as the regionalist muralist Thomas Hart Benton, African American poet Langston Hughes, and “Okie” folk musician Woody Guthrie. My focus on the “second” Popular Front is not intended to obscure the continuities that this culture’s constituents experienced during the years of the Hitler-Stalin pact.<sup>19</sup>

After America’s entry into the war, Browder rejoined the country’s left-liberal coalition, and he reasserted the party’s “American” stance, which promoted not full-scale class revolution, but rather looked towards the egalitarian roots of the American democratic system for a means by which social justice could be achieved. Hollywood’s Communists and liberals believed, for the most part, that the vision of

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<sup>18</sup> Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 180-199; Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 6-7; On popular culture, also see Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

the United States that the Roosevelt administration believed was essential to promote in order to win the war was the same vision that American communism would see brought to the country. Hollywood's leftists "came in out of the political cold" during the war, according to Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund.<sup>20</sup> Paul Jarrico, who would be blacklisted in the 1950s, remembered it more pointedly, asserting that the film industry's communists "were more patriotic than anyone, so fucking patriotic in fact that [they] didn't protest the internment of the Japanese." Sardonicly, he stated, "Yes, we were right in the mainstream."<sup>21</sup> In the Popular Front, communists were the "fellow travelers," not liberals as is popularly suggested.<sup>22</sup>

Still, activists in Hollywood went out of their way to put the vision of an egalitarian, democratic, and progressive America into action, even when its members met resistance. Although they were quiet about the internment of Japanese-Americans, the Popular Front in Hollywood understood the politics of anti-fascism, those which had become mainstream with the United States' entry into World War II, as ones which promoted racial and social justice. Liberals and leftists worked towards racial equality not simply because it was a tenet of wartime propaganda goals, but also because it aligned with Popular Front antifascist

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<sup>20</sup> Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 180. Also see Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 182.

<sup>22</sup> John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood's Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 46. Michael Denning similarly refutes to "core-periphery approach to understanding the Communist Party's role in the Popular Front: Denning, *The Cultural Front*, xviii.

ideology. Such ideology was rooted in concern over Hitler's designs for Europe, but it was also informed by domestic affairs like the case of the Scottsboro Boys, in which African American teenagers had been put on trial in Alabama for allegedly raping two white women. Mainstream Hollywood liberals would only abandon such expressions of anti-fascism after HUAC's 1947 hearings.

In addition to thinking of the far left as moderating itself during the war, we can also understand its members as capitalizing on a discourse of anti-fascism that shifted conceptions of Americanness towards the common goals of Popular Front liberals and leftists. While we can occasionally see glimpses of anti-fascist Popular Front rhetoric in wartime propaganda films, it is found prevailing in film industry workers' wartime activism in the city of Los Angeles, where they assembled a myriad of interconnected organizations and committees. Two such projects were the Hollywood Canteen and the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee.

During the war, the film industry supported and ran the operations of the Hollywood Canteen, a nightspot for servicemen on shore leave. The Canteen was to feature celebrities greeting GIs at the door and performing on stage, and was modeled after New York City's Stage Door Canteen, itself the product of Broadway's labor unions who imagined the retreat as a "people's night club." The Stage Door Canteen, according to musician and Hollywood Canteen co-founder and vice-president Carroll Hollister, was a place with "no racial distinctions or national

prejudices.”<sup>23</sup> First open in October of 1942 near the intersection of Sunset and Vine, the Hollywood Canteen was presided over by actress Bette Davis, and its Board of Directors included screenwriter Dalton Trumbo and actor John Garfield, both of whom would be later blacklisted.<sup>24</sup> Servicemen that visited the Canteen were treated to musical performances by Davis or other stars like Rita Hayworth, who reportedly also helped make sandwiches on occasion. The Canteen was so popular that GIs were asked to limit their visits to one hour.<sup>25</sup>

The Hollywood Canteen was also the subject of an extensive FBI file. Federal agents were concerned with two interrelated issues: the matter of Communist infiltration of Hollywood and the racially integrated nature of the Canteen. The FBI relied on an inside informant who was attending the Canteen’s Board of Directors meetings. And this informant’s reports concerned the matter of race almost exclusively. According to the FBI, the informant “reported that there seemed to be a considerable complaint and dissatisfaction brewing at the Hollywood Canteen over the matter of the co-mingling of the white and colored soldiers and the female entertainers.”<sup>26</sup> The canteen employed secretaries and other low-level Hollywood staffers as well as women outside of the industry as hostesses, and it was assumed

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<sup>23</sup> Carroll Hollister to Studio Transportation Drivers Union No. 399, July 10, 1942, Hollywood Canteen File, Federal Bureau of Investigation (hereafter cited as HC-FBI).

<sup>24</sup> Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 167; January 9, 1943 report, HC-FBI.

<sup>25</sup> Starr, *Embattled Dreams*, 168; Ed Sikov, *Dark Victory: The Life of Bette Davis* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007), 231.

<sup>26</sup> Bernard Gordon, *The Gordon Files: A Screenwriter Recalls Twenty Years of FBI Surveillance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 332.

that they would dance with servicemen if they were asked. This made producers and studio heads, who feared negative publicity, uneasy.<sup>27</sup>

The communists in charge at the Hollywood Canteen were at first bullish about the prospect of using it as a platform to push for racial equality. Hollister, a musician, stressed its significance in the context of the war, according to the FBI's source. Hollister "drew a vivid picture of the persecution of minorities under Hitler," he or she reported, "particularly of the Jews and compared it with the persecution of the Negroes in America." Time and time again, Hollywood's leftists and liberals would employ this strategy of linking the wartime anti-fascist cause with that of "domestic anti-fascism," or civil rights, at home. According to the report, Hollister also noted that the military police had been questioning the black soldiers and sailors when they left the Canteen, presumably to find out if they had been socializing with white women. Hollister and Trumbo even apparently argued originally for a proposition that hostesses not be able to refuse a serviceman of a different race, but acquiesced, so long as mixed dancing would be allowed.<sup>28</sup> According to the FBI's informant, the Board of Directors' meeting on March 22, 1943 became "quite heated" as someone raised a motion to prevent the hostesses from dancing with members of a different race. He or she notes that the motion "was lost by an overwhelming majority," and then suggests that race riots might ensue if mixing were allowed.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 83-84.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 332, 336

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 332.

The nature of FBI records makes it difficult to discern the true nature of these meetings. But the FBI did appear to be convinced that Trumbo, Garfield, Davis and others were acting on behalf of the Communist Party. The same report noted that

there is no doubt that the Hollywood Canteen is under the control of Communist elements, that it was a Communist inspired project in the beginning. The question of Negro equality is one of the basic planks in the Communist Party's platform. They are constantly raising this question to win the Negroes over to their influence, and if they can maintain the practice now being put into effect in the Hollywood Canteen, they hope to use it as an example for other sections to follow.<sup>30</sup>

Mary Ford was one of the canteen's vocal opponents of integration. The wife of noted film director John Ford, she complained at a board meeting on July 8, 1943 that one evening, her daughter, who was working there, had been forced into dancing with a black soldier. Jules Stein, the head of MCA, also expressed concern at the meeting, warning those that were in favor of integration that the FBI would be investigating the canteen and the Communist ties of those on the board with whom he did not agree. The debate over mixed dancing lasted several hours, after which time the motion to allow it was carried.<sup>31</sup> Canteen visitors continued to dance in subsequent months, crossing racial boundaries on occasion.<sup>32</sup> For her part, Mary Ford continued to call police officers over whenever she saw mixed race dancing. When one of the policeman at the Canteen reported this to her husband, John Ford replied that his wife "was inclined to become agitated and excited about racial

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 333.

<sup>31</sup> August 12, 1943 report, HC-FBI.

<sup>32</sup> October 5, 1943 report, HC-FBI.

matters,” and that the policeman “should take Mrs. Ford out of the Canteen” if he felt it necessary.<sup>33</sup>

It even appears as though there was a tacit understanding that the hostesses would occasionally do more than simply dance with the canteen’s patrons. Bette Davis herself was reported to have disappeared with servicemen during some evenings.<sup>34</sup> In fact, when Warner Brothers made the film *Hollywood Canteen* in 1944, the storyline centered around the efforts of a serviceman to woo star Joan Leslie, suggesting that the romantic dreams of a GI could be fulfilled at the club. But Mary Ford’s concerns were not the only ones expressed; the FBI was apparently just as concerned with black hostesses dancing with white servicemen as the other way around.<sup>35</sup> Of course, the feature film did not feature any protagonists of color, nor did it show mixed race dancing. It did offer some token moments that showed Native American and Latino servicemen, although they were shown to be segregated among others of their type inside the Canteen.

Film industry workers’ involvement in the Sleepy Lagoon case represented another extension of Rooseveltian politics, one which also engaged with the local politics of anti-racism. Rallying behind the causes of seventeen lower-class Mexican-Americans on trial for charges associated with the death of a youth named Jose Diaz that ranged from assault to first-degree murder, members of the Popular Front sought to uncover the ways in which the social fabric of Los Angeles was

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<sup>33</sup> March 15, 1994 report, HC-FBI.

<sup>34</sup> Sikov, *Dark Victory*, 230.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon, *The Gordon Files*, 336



tangled with racialized class inequality. And their strategy in doing so was to call out the similarities between the fight against fascism abroad and the fight for social justice in local communities.<sup>36</sup>

Those who worked to defend the boys on trial, who had organized under the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, located the roots of the case's injustice in the socio-economic alienation of East Los Angeles's Latino community and in persistent attempts by the press to dramatize the degree to which young Mexican-Americans were dangerous criminals. The Hearst Press in particular, the Committee argued, had singled out "pachucos," members of a subculture most notably characterized by its flamboyant zoot suit attire, as being unproductive and unwelcome members of the community. In the days prior to the murder of Jose Diaz in August of 1942, the Committee notes, the city's Hearst papers, the *Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express* and the *Los Angeles Examiner*, featured such headlines as "MEXICAN GOON SQUADS," "ZOOT SUIT GANGS," "PACHUCO KILLERS," and "JUVENILE GAND WAR LAID TO YOUTHS' DESIRE TO THRILL."<sup>37</sup>

Already sensational, the case took on a new stature after the "zoot suit riots" of June 1943, when servicemen began attacking young Mexican Americans near the Naval Reserve Armory adjacent to Chinatown. The first night's attacks were followed by subsequent nights of combat in which servicemen as well as civilians

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<sup>36</sup> Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, *The Sleepy Lagoon Case* (Los Angeles, Mercury Printing Co., 1943). Also see Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, 8; Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, *The Sleepy Lagoon Case*.

not only patrolled downtown for zoot suiters, but also rode taxicabs into East Los Angeles to terrorize those who appeared in pachuco style dress. Some young Mexican Americans mobilized and responded in kind. The rioting lasted for five days, until military authorities made Los Angeles off limits to servicemen. The Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee's suspicions of a "fascist" press were confirmed by the local papers' insistence that the soldiers were only doing what the police refused to do, that is, to clean up the streets of Los Angeles. For their part, the Los Angeles Police Department concentrated almost exclusively on arresting Mexican Americans.<sup>38</sup>

The Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee boasted broad support among activists, artists and intellectuals. Amongst its other supporters, Hollywood contributed writers, producers and stars, including Orson Welles, Canada Lee, Lena Horne, Vincent Price, Rita Hayworth, Katherine Hepburn, Dore Schary, John Ford, John Huston, and Sam Spiegel. Of those who would be later blacklisted in Hollywood, its ranks included John Garfield, Dalton Trumbo, Ring Lardner, Jr., Lester Cole, Jules Dassin, Robert Rossen, Sam Ornitz, Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Guy Endore, and the organizational leader of the industry's communists, John Howard Lawson.<sup>39</sup>

Screenwriter Guy Endore took the lead on a project to publish the story of the Sleepy Lagoon trial from a Popular Front perspective. The result was *The Sleepy*

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<sup>38</sup> Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, 167-182.

<sup>39</sup> Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, 205; Memorandum, box 83 folder 3, Guy Endore Papers, Young Research Library, University of California Los Angeles (hereafter cited as GE-YRL); Alice McGrath to Guy Endore, July 3, 1944, box 83 folder 8, GE-YRL; Box 83 folder 3, GE-YRL.

*Lagoon Mystery*, a 48-page pamphlet that was sold on newsstands in Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as by mail order, in 1944.<sup>40</sup> The Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee also sent copies to activists, politicians and leaders in the United States and Mexico.<sup>41</sup> The degree to which the Committee engaged Mexican leaders reveals the stock they put in leveraging the wartime U.S. “Good Neighbor Policy” in order to link the fight against fascism to the Sleepy Lagoon case. Endore quoted a statement of Latin American delegates to an International Labor Organization conference in arguing that the trial was an attempt by “the Fifth Column...to stir up ‘Anti-Yankee’ sentiment in order to undermine hemisphere unity in the war against Fascism.”<sup>42</sup> Carey McWilliams, in the introduction to Endore’s work, argued that “the war has profoundly altered the whole question of Latin-American relations,” and that it provided “the new framework within which a bridge of inter-cultural understanding can be built between Anglo and Hispano in the Southwest.”<sup>43</sup>

The pamphlet is littered with antifascist rhetoric, at one point, imploring the reader to “study well” the words of Adolf Hitler and Franklin Roosevelt, “and note that the key to both lies in the question of how minorities and citizens of weak nations shall be treated.”<sup>44</sup> Endore continues to contrast Hitler’s race-baiting anti-Semitism with Roosevelt’s plan for a “second Bill of Rights” which would include not

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<sup>40</sup> Press Release, July 27, 1944, box 83 folder 5, GE-YRL.

<sup>41</sup> “Defense Praised: General Cardenas Hails Sleepy Lagoon Committee,” August 24, 1944, box 83 folder 1, GE-YRL; Everett Wile to Guy Endore, June 29, 1944, box 83 folder 2, GE-YRL.

<sup>42</sup> Guy Endore, *The Sleepy Lagoon Mystery* (Los Angeles: Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, 1944), 47.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

just freedom from discrimination but also the “right to a job,” “adequate pay,” “decent housing,” and “adequate medical care.” “Prejudice is like a thief,” Endore warns the reader, arguing that fascist sentiment is that which claims it will improve the lots of many by scapegoating a few, like those on trial for the Sleepy Lagoon murder. He concludes dramatically: “It can happen here!”<sup>45</sup> In Endore’s writing, as it does in the words of other Popular Front participants, global fascism becomes an axis around which the interconnected matters of race and class are able to revolve. The back matter of *Sleepy Lagoon Mystery* asks the reader to make a donation to the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, noting that the donation will not only help to free innocent boys, but also will “aid the Allies in the prosecution of our great war and lay the grounds for a more enduring peace.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Race, Ethnicity, and Hollywood’s Second Popular Front**

The Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee was part of a complex web of organizations, an alphabet soup of liberal, popular front, and communist groups that attempted to turn the discourse of anti-fascism towards civil rights matters in the United States. For those in the film industry, the most important of these was the Hollywood Democratic Committee (HDC). Founded in 1943, the HDC joined with a New York organization, the Independent Citizens' Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, and became the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions (HICCASP) in 1945. A year later, ICCASP joined with

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 48.

the Progressive Citizens of America to form the ASP-PCA, which later transformed once more into the NCASP, the National Council of Arts, Sciences and Professions (in which those in the film industry organized under the Southern California chapter).<sup>47</sup> Throughout its many-acronymed incarnations, the organization and its members in the film industry were consistently devoted to matters of social justice and civil and economic rights.

The Hollywood Democratic Committee was initially imagined as “an association of voters which has its origin in the motion picture community, formed to help ensure political victory on the home front, as well as military victory on the battlefields.”<sup>48</sup> During the war, the HDC hewed close to the Roosevelt party line, occasionally to the detriment of its own mission as an antifascist organization. In a letter to the War Relocation Authority, for example, the committee wrote to “to commend the War Relocation Authority for its fair and unbiased treatment of Japanese American citizens placed under [its] jurisdiction.”<sup>49</sup> But more often than not, the wartime atmosphere of antifascism allowed for the HDC to push its pro-civil rights platform. In its founding statement, the HDC listed seven “issues which demand immediate consideration”:

A democratic rationing system; housing for defense workers; protection of labor’s rights so that labor can continue its magnificent contribution to the war effort; facilities for the care of children of mothers working in defense industry; an adequate supply of farm labor so that food can be efficiently

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<sup>47</sup> See: Hollywood Democratic Committee Records, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison (hereafter cited as HDC-WHS).

<sup>48</sup> “Statement of Aims of the Hollywood Democratic Committee,” box 7 folder 11, HDC-WHS.

<sup>49</sup> George Pepper to War Relocation Authority, June 29, 1943, box 8 folder 18, HDC-WHS.

produced and transported; humane and scientific means of dealing with juvenile delinquency; [and] an end of discrimination and lynch law against minorities.<sup>50</sup>

After the war ended, the extension of the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) become one of the chief objectives of the committee, now allied with the New York based Independent Citizens' Council of Arts, Sciences, and Professions. During the war, Roosevelt created the FEPC in order to guard against anti-black discrimination in war industry employment. ICCASP's 1945 constitution adopted four objectives: "international security," "full employment," "extension of the franchise and abolition of the poll tax," and "an end to racial discrimination and a permanent F.E.P.C."<sup>51</sup>

HICCASP often worked alongside members of the Los Angeles African American community, most notably with Charlotta Bass, the owner and editor of the city's most widely read black newspaper, the *California Eagle*. Bass seems to have developed a close friendship with Hollywood screenwriter and Hollywood Communist Party branch leader John Howard Lawson, whom she described affectionately as knowing more about the history of her people than did the residents of East Los Angeles.<sup>52</sup> She was also friendly with Albert Maltz, who along with Lawson would later be blacklisted.<sup>53</sup> Bass had been a member of the Sleepy

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<sup>50</sup> "Statement of Aims of the Hollywood Democratic Committee," box 7 folder 11, HDC-WHS.

<sup>51</sup> "Program on the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions," box 4 folder 20, HDC-WHS.

<sup>52</sup> Charlotta Bass, *Forty Years: Memoirs from the Pages of a Newspaper* (Los Angeles: California Eagle Press, 1960), 176, 198.

<sup>53</sup> Albert Maltz Interview (Los Angeles: UCLA Oral History Research Center, 1983), <https://archive.org/details/citizenwriterinr01malt> (accessed Nov. 18, 2013).

Lagoon Committee, and she described the ASP as being “close to [her] heart.”<sup>54</sup> She would often speak at HDC, HICCASP, and ASP meetings and events, such as the 1943 meeting on the “minority problem,” where she argued that the “fascist outbreaks” that were occurring in American cities at the time were “second only to the Jewish pogroms of Hitler.”<sup>55</sup> Bass later contributed to the Hollywood ASP’s Conference on Thought Control in July, 1947, which anticipated HUAC’s imminent investigation.<sup>56</sup> Like the Euro-American members of the Popular Front, Bass frequently employed the World War II rhetoric of antifascism to make claims for civil rights at home, making explicit note of the solidarities between Jews, Mexican Americans, and African Americans.<sup>57</sup>

By the fall of 1946, HICCASP was actively engaged in an anti-lynching campaign that had become heightened in response to the murder of two black men and two black women in Georgia. In addition to offering \$1000 to anyone who might help catch the perpetrators of this crime, HICCASP sent letters to U.S. Attorney General Tom Clark and President Harry Truman, among others, asking them to push for civil rights legislations, investigate the KKK and to “restore the rule

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<sup>54</sup> Quote appears in Charlotta Bass, “On the Sidewalk,” May 19, 1949, box 5 folder 2, Samuel Ornitz Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison; Committee membership list, box 83 folder 3, GE-YRL.

<sup>55</sup> Quote appears in “Minutes of Meeting on Minority Problem,” June 16, 1943, box 7 folder 14, HDC-WHS; Invitation, 1945, box 7 folder 11, HDC-WHS; Bass, *Forty Years*, 183-84.

<sup>56</sup> Box 8 folder 9, HDC-WHS; Harold Salemsen, ed., *Thought Control in the U.S.A.* (Los Angeles: Hollywood A.S.P. Council, P.C.A., 1947).

<sup>57</sup> Melina Abdullah and Regina Freer, “Bass to Bass,” in *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, eds. Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 336.

of law.”<sup>58</sup> Actress Lena Horne, also an active member of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), another Popular Front organization, lent her voice to various calls for new FEPC and anti-poll tax legislation, including a CRC pamphlet entitled, “Will America Whitewash This?”<sup>59</sup>

The Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee never made a movie; in fact, although the war effort required soldiers of all races and ethnicities to be shown on screen, it also precluded the possibility of any film interrogating matters of social or economic injustice.<sup>60</sup> And at first, in the immediate period following the end of the war, it seemed that Hollywood’s Popular Front would have little influence in the matter of communicating its message on the screen. But if the September 9th cover story in *Time* magazine is any indication, it appears as though by 1946, America was getting increasingly used to its entertainers involving themselves in politics.<sup>61</sup> In “Glamor Pusses,” *Time* notes that most Hollywood stars, “horrified at the thought of being bloated capitalists, favor leftish causes of one kind or another.” The ICCASP, it suggests, has been the first organization to organize them all under one singular banner, resulting in enormous rallies to raise money. Perhaps more importantly, “some men [and] women...are so conditioned that they are unable to resist when

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<sup>58</sup> “H.I.C.A.S.P. Adds \$1000 for Lynching Arrests,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1946; John Cromwell to Tom Clark, Aug. 2, 1946, box 6 folder 1, HDC-WHS; John Cromwell to Harry Truman, Aug. 2, 1946, box 6 folder 1, HDC-WHS.

<sup>59</sup> “Will America Whitewash This?” box 6 folder 1, HDC-WHS; “Among the Casualties of War – 1946” box 6 folder 1, HDC-WHS.

<sup>60</sup> May, *The Big Tomorrow* 146-148.

<sup>61</sup> A decade prior, audiences could barely conceive of filmmakers and stars being active in political causes. David Welky, *The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 7.



their favorite movie star whoops up an issue.” The article suggests that the real power of ICCASP is in the influence of its famous artists, writers, intellectuals, scientists, and above all, its film stars. It notes among them Humphrey Bogart, Eddie Cantor, Edward G. Robinson, Frank Sinatra, Charles Laughton, Robert Young, John Garfield, Groucho Marx, Bob Hope, Danny Kaye, Mickey Rooney, and Bette Davis, among others.<sup>62</sup>

In the September 1946 cover story, *Time* assumes an ambiguous stance towards the possibility of communist influence in ICCASP, perhaps assuming ambivalence on the part of the reader. Whereas it mentions that Howard Fast, the “writer of ICCASP’s handouts,” is also a writer for *New Masses* and *Communist Daily Worker* without further comment, the article later suggests that some of the organization’s more radical members are like “fleas on a dog.” “Like almost any liberal political organization,” it qualifies, “ICCASP has picked up some Communists.” But *Time* assures its readers that such membership has no bearing on the organization’s political course.<sup>63</sup>

If the magazine was occasionally glib while dealing with the politicking celebrities of ICCASP, *Time* gave much less sympathy to Hollywood’s reactionary answer to the HDC and its descendants, the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (MPA). While reporting on the group’s formation, the magazine denigrated the MPA president’s adaptation of Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943) and the organization’s cozy relationship with Hearst

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<sup>62</sup> “Glamor Pusses,” *Time*, September 9, 1946, 25-29.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

newspapers. The magazine, perhaps illustrating the degree to which the popular press was in line with wartime Popular Front ideology, let liberal film producer Walter Wanger have the last word, quoting his warning from a dinner for Vice President Henry Wallace that red-baiting was the “familiar Hitler line by which communism is made the bogey.”<sup>64</sup> Hollywood’s antifascists quickly responded to the Motion Picture Alliance by employing a familiar wartime lexicon, charging the organization with being anti-Semitic, anti-labor and “semi-fascist.”<sup>65</sup>

Their insistence that the MPA was anti-Semitic may have been a knee jerk reaction, rooted in response to a political discourse that commonly grouped radicals, blacks, and Jews as un-American and subversive, and also rooted in their own global anti-fascist ideology.<sup>66</sup> The MPA responded that in fact, six of their ten board members were “of the Jewish faith.” They also remarked, in a 1944 magazine article, that its makeup consisted of “some case-hardened Republicans and some case-hardened Democrats,” and “New-Dealers and anti-New Dealers.”<sup>67</sup> In fact, MPA voices like Ronald Reagan were members of the HDC as well. But if the MPA did not allow their anti-communism to explicitly color their words with racialized conceptions of Americanism, other powerful political figures did.

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<sup>64</sup> “California: The Battle of Hollywood,” *Time*, February 14, 1944.

<sup>65</sup> James Kevin McGuinness, “Double-Cross in Hollywood: reprint from *New Leader*,” folder 3870, Hedda Hopper Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles; Advertisement, *Hollywood Reporter*, June 23, 1944, box 30 folder 303, Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.

<sup>66</sup> Steven Carr, “Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Question” in *Hollywood & Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23-59; also see Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> McGuinness, “Double-Cross in Hollywood.”

At the same time that it was arguing for a peacetime FEPC, HICCASP issued its most substantive piece of literature, an attack on John Rankin, the United States Congressman from Mississippi. In a booklet entitled "Introducing... Representative John Rankin," HICCASP sought to defend itself against Rankin's claims that Hollywood was "dominated largely by subversive aliens plotting against American ideals and institutions." Industry members feared that Rankin, a member of HUAC, would steer his committee to investigate Hollywood, which at the time was already being investigated by California state senator Jack Tenney.<sup>68</sup> The strategy of the booklet's writers was largely to illustrate the degree to which Rankin's politics themselves are "un-American" in order to mark HUAC as illegitimate. And the notion of "Americanism" it draws upon in doing so is that which was formed and popularized during the war years.

Assembled by actor Robert Shaw and film producer and HICCASP Vice Chairman Dore Schary, the booklet argues that Rankin, an advocate of the poll tax, has perhaps set a record for representing the smallest percentage of voters in his district. The maintenance of "white supremacy," HICCASP notes, is essential to Rankin's political career. It emphasizes the degree to which Rankin's "Christian Americanism" is antithetical to the ideas of Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal and presumably the Popular Front, whose Americanism sought to "unite all Americans, regardless of race, creed or color, on a basis of mutual respect and good will and induce them to work together toward the common goal of lasting peace and

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<sup>68</sup> "Introducing... Representative John Rankin," box 7 folder 16, HDC-WHS.

prosperity.” Rankin, by contrast, is described as “many times [having] referred to ‘Jews and Niggers’ as a co-equal menace to his ideals of ‘white supremacy’ and ‘Christian Americanism’.”<sup>69</sup>

On the floor of Congress, Rankin often capitalized on an already prevalent discourse of American Anglo-Saxon Protestant hegemony that saw all non-whites and non-Christians as alien, un-American, and subordinate to structures of white power. “White Gentiles in this country still have some rights left, and should be protected from the persecutions they are now compelled to endure,” Rankin argued against the extension of the FEPC, of which the office itself, he complained, was staffed with too many Jews and African Americans.<sup>70</sup>

Although they would later become accepted by society as “white ethnics,” Jews were still racialized in the United States at the end of the World War II. In the film industry, where many Jews found enormous success, the producers and moguls adopted the same strategy as did the major Jewish organizations in America: to suggest the compatibility of Jewishness and Americanness, to promote cultural assimilation, and most importantly, to play down Jewish distinctiveness and keep a low profile altogether. Somewhat absurdly, American Jews, according to what became a popular aphorism, were purportedly just “like everybody else – only more

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Shaw to Walter Winchell, Dec. 19, 1945, box 101 folder 3, Dore Schary Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison (hereafter cited as DS-WHS); Edgar Peterson to Frank Capra, Nov. 30, 1945, box 101 folder 2, DS-WHS; “Introducing... Representative John Rankin,” box 7 folder 16, HDC-WHS.

<sup>70</sup> “Introducing... Representative John Rankin,” box 7 folder 16, HDC-WHS.

so.”<sup>71</sup> Still, similar to other newer immigrant groups, the prevalence of Jews in lower class American urban areas and the resultant involvement in radical and labor movements of some Jews propagated the stereotype, already prevalent in Europe, that a large number were communists.

Conversely, some radical and progressive Jews believed their politics to be rooted in their own secular culture, which they understood to be progressive, literate, egalitarian, and cosmopolitan.<sup>72</sup> And to some degree, there did exist a feedback loop that kept alive a sense of solidarity – what scholars call an “affinity narrative” – among liberal and radical Jews, African Americans, and underclasses more generally.<sup>73</sup> If Rankin consistently grouped them together, so did the American left. And if Rankin was intent on dividing Americans up into Christian whites on one hand and everyone else on the other, it may have made the left more vocal in their dismissal of a narrow conception of American identity. While the Popular Front strategy of invoking Jeffersonian republicanism rather than Marxism manifested in the activism of Hollywood’s leftists, so did critiques of thinking in terms of an “Anglo-Saxon” America that was sometimes central to Jeffersonian discourse. In 1945, ICCASP became alarmed when a study by an organization called the Writers’ War Board noted the absence of “non-Anglo-Saxon” characters in

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<sup>71</sup> Samuel Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the 20th Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 37.

<sup>72</sup> Alan Wald argues, of Jews among the literary left, that the turn towards Popular Front-era communism “usually involv[ed] a reclamation of Jewish identity in some form.” Alan Wald, *Trinity of Passion: The Literary Left and the Antifascist Crusade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 209.

<sup>73</sup> On affinity narratives, see: Charles Hersch, “‘Every Time I Try to Play Black, It Comes Out Sounding Jewish’: Jewish Jazz Musicians and Racial Identity,” *American Jewish History* 97 no. 3 (July 2013), 265.

prominent roles in works of short fiction. The characterizations that the board found, it noted, “could easily be used to ‘prove’ that the Negroes are lazy, the Jews wily, the Irish superstitious, and the Italians criminal.”<sup>74</sup> ICCASP’s concerns were published in HICCASP’s monthly periodical, the *Hollywood Independent*, alongside articles that praised the contributions and sacrifices of black soldiers, and championed the role of labor in the war.

In other *Hollywood Independent* headlines, HICCASP noted mass demonstrations in front of Warner Brothers Studios, as the film industry itself had gone on strike.<sup>75</sup> As others have noted, the capitulation of Hollywood moguls and studio executives to the demands of anti-communists has much to do with the strikes that erupted at Warner Brothers and Disney Studios at the end of the war. But the tendency of the Popular Front to investigate the intersections of race and class, and the tendency of anti-communists to conflate foreignness and non-whiteness with subversiveness, undeniably racialized the red scare in Hollywood. As the events that would lead to the blacklist unfolded, the left’s emphasis on civil rights – by which I mean an understanding that the government has a role to play in protecting citizens against racial inequality and economic insecurity – became increasingly untenable to the liberals who had to choose sides, their choices appearing to be between the anti-communist, Anglo-Saxon descended Americans, or the communistic, alien, un-Americans.

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<sup>74</sup> “Writers’ War Board Strongly Attacks Anglo-Saxon Myths,” *Hollywood Independent*, October, 1945, box 4 folder 17, HDC-WHS.

<sup>75</sup> *Hollywood Independent*, October, 1945, box 4 folder 17, HDC-WHS.

Such a growing disparity in choice became clear after November of 1947. Rankin and the new chairman of HUAC, New Jersey Republican J. Parnell Thomas, seized upon the growing calls by Jack Tenney, the MPA, and others to investigate possible communist infiltration of the film industry, and HUAC subpoenaed “friendly” and “unfriendly” witnesses to testify in Washington, D.C. in October of that year. Most industry members believed it wise to cooperate with the committee, but in addition to extolling the All-American nature of the pictures that it made, they also played down the possibility of communistic messages seeping into them in order to avoid bad publicity for the industry as a whole and to neutralize HUAC’s cause.<sup>76</sup> Any semblance of industry unity broke down however, when the unfriendly witnesses delivered testimony that drew upon the increasingly unpopular rhetoric of the Popular Front. Just as it did in the years prior, the Hollywood antifascists employed a rhetorical strategy that was pro-labor and pro-civil rights, and that condemned any attempt to silence such politics as fascist, racist, and anti-Semitic, and therefore incompatible with New Deal conceptions of Americanism.

The “unfriendly” witnesses that were called before the Thomas-Rankin committee, who would become known as the “Hollywood Ten,” had prepared written statements for the committee, although most were not allowed to read the statements when they took the stand. Samuel Ornitz’s statement began: “I wish to

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<sup>76</sup> W.R. Wilkerson, “Tradeviews,” *Hollywood Reporter*, November 20, 1947, box 46 folder 596, WW-MHL; Bosley Crowther, “Command Decisions: Will Film-Making Be Complicated by the ‘Un-American’ Probers?” *New York Times*, November 2, 1947, X1.

address this Committee as a Jew, because one of its leading members is the outstanding anti-Semite in the Congress and revels in this fact.”<sup>77</sup> Ornitz continued to describe the threat of “domestic fascism” in the United States, and noted that the director and the producer of the film *Crossfire*, one of Hollywood’s strongest indictments of domestic fascism, had both been called before the committee as unfriendly witnesses. His unread statement proceeds to make the link between anti-fascism and anti-racism. “Civil rights,” he argues, “have become a mockery in America.”<sup>78</sup>

Another “unfriendly” witness, Adrian Scott attacked the anti-civil rights records of HUAC’s congressmen, and he accused the committee itself of waging a “cold war...against the Jewish and Negro people.”<sup>79</sup> His unread statement charged the committeemen with doing nothing for their minority constituencies, citing the existence of “bad housing and unsanitary ghettos.”<sup>80</sup> John Howard Lawson similarly linked ethno-racial and socio-economic issues, arguing that HUAC wanted “to cut living standards, introduce an economy of poverty, wipe out labor’s rights, attack Negroes, Jews, and other minorities, [and] drive us into a disastrous and unnecessary war.”<sup>81</sup>

After the courtroom outbursts of Lawson, Ornitz, and others of the Hollywood Ten resulted in HUAC citing them for contempt of court, John Huston,

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<sup>77</sup> Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, 98.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 76.



Humphrey Bogart and the rest of the members of the Committee for the First Amendment attacked HUAC's strong arm tactics. But as public opinion turned against the Hollywood Ten, their disapproval in the ways in which the Ten behaved grew. On November 19th, Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, declared that the industry supported the committee's actions. On November 24th, the House of Representatives approved of HUAC's contempt citations, putting the Ten on a path to imprisonment.<sup>82</sup> Finally, on December 3, 1947, Johnston and other motion picture industry executives and producers met in New York City and subsequently issued a press release, known as the "Waldorf Statement," that would make clear that the industry would adopt a policy not to employ anyone who had been cited by HUAC as having communist affiliations.<sup>83</sup>

At its height, the CFA had over 500 members, including those in the film industry and other professions, which was certainly more than HICCASP could claim.<sup>84</sup> This may be due to the fact that the members of the entertainment industry who cared little for politics were still concerned that an investigation into communism in Hollywood would only bring the industry down. Whereas HICCASP and its later incarnations lost members in the years after the war because of increasing concern over the role of communists in its leadership, the CFA made clear

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>83</sup> Eric Johnston, et al., "Waldorf Statement," December 3, 1947, reprinted in Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 455.

<sup>84</sup> Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, 138.

its disdain of both communism and the Thomas-Rankin Committee.<sup>85</sup> Humphrey Bogart tried to articulate the group's message when he declared forcefully, "This has nothing to do with Communism," and continued by explaining that he was "an outraged and angry citizen who [felt] that nobody in this country has any right to kick around the Constitution of the United States, not even the Un-American Activities Committee."<sup>86</sup> Similarly, William Wyler insisted that there were no communists or communist sympathizers in the CFA.<sup>87</sup> And the CFA issued a statement declaring that it had no interest in defending the Hollywood Ten.<sup>88</sup>

Wyler consistently insisted that if HUAC's actions were accepted by Americans as legitimate, the film industry would suffer by its not being able to make films with social messages. Wyler himself had recently directed the Academy Awards' Best Picture of 1946, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, which told the story of three servicemen acclimating to life after World War II. The film criticized American postwar society's imperative to "make money" at any cost, and in one scene, featured a sinister character who after telling the main character that they were fighting the wrong enemy – the United States should have been fighting communism, not fascism – gets his due as the film's protagonist socks him in the

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<sup>85</sup> Allen Rivkin to Walter Reilly, July 10, 1952, box 100 folder 4, DS-WHS; Statement, May 22, 1952, box 100 folder 6, DS-WHS.

<sup>86</sup> "What's This Trip About," box 46 folder 596, WW-MHL.

<sup>87</sup> William Wyler to Joseph W. Martin, Jr., November 5, 1947, box 46 folder 596, WW-MHL.

<sup>88</sup> Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, 138.

face. Wyler told the press that he would not have been able to make *Best Years of Our Lives* in the political atmosphere of late 1947.<sup>89</sup>

He said the same thing to American audiences in two star-studded radio broadcasts that the CFA produced on October 26 and November 2.<sup>90</sup> The shows, which were titled “Hollywood Fights Back,” aired nationally on the American Broadcasting Company and also featured Huston, Heinreid, Bogart, Kaye, and Bacall, as well as John Garfield, Gene Kelly, Ira Gershwin, Judy Garland, William Holden, Frederic March, Peter Lorre, Edward G. Robinson, Vincent Price, Robert Young, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Moss Hart, June Havoc, Rita Hayworth, Burt Lancaster, Myrna Loy, Groucho Marx, Gregory Peck, Frank Sinatra, and Jane Wyatt. All of them argued that HUAC’s actions were in violation of the Bill of the Rights.<sup>91</sup>

But strikingly, Wyler and the rest of the CFA’s spokespeople abandoned the anti-fascist language of the Popular Front. Although Wyler argued for the continued importance of the “social message” film, he, Huston, Bogart and the others adopted, perhaps strategically, a lexicon that would combat anti-communists on their own terms: those that made a sharp distinction between democracy and freedom on one hand, and totalitarianism and tyranny on the other. In some ways, this was no different than the strategy of the Hollywood Ten, who were advised by Communist

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<sup>89</sup> “Committee for the First Amendment,” box 46 folder 596, WW-MHL; William Wyler to Bosley Crowther, November 1947, box 46 folder 596, WW-MHL.

<sup>90</sup> “HLYD FIGHTS BACK - (FINAL) - SPOT 27 LIVE,” box 46 folder 596, WW-MHL.

<sup>91</sup> Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, 140-141; “Now Available on Records...,” November 28, 1947, box 4 folder 9, HDC-WHS.

Party lawyers to cite the First Amendment in their defense in front of HUAC.<sup>92</sup> But absent from the CFA's arguments were those that would draw links between the inquisition in Hollywood, anti-Semitism, racism, anti-labor sentiment, and the coming cold war.

That the language of civil liberties would supplant that of civil rights in left-liberal political discourse was by no means a foregone conclusion in the early years of the postwar red scare. The modern civil liberties movement was deeply threaded with the language of racial and economic justice. Founded by the socialist Roger Baldwin, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) articulated a platform in which civil liberties were a means by which the organization could reach an end of civil rights. In its position statement that was issued in its first year, 1920, the ACLU revealed itself to be chiefly concerned with the rights of labor. Its ten points included not only the right to free speech, assemblage, and the protection against search and seizure – tenets of what we would agree to be civil liberties today – but it also included items for the rights of immigrants who might hold “radical views” and for the rights of racial minorities.<sup>93</sup>

Anti-fascism, and later anti-totalitarianism, provided a framework for the discourse of civil liberties that allowed it to grow beyond its twentieth century renaissance in socialist and anarchist politics. But such growth, I contend, coincided

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<sup>92</sup> Edward Dmytryk, *Odd Man Out: A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 53; Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 267-8.

<sup>93</sup> “Civil Liberty,” American Civil Liberties Union Microfilm, Reel 16, Vol. 120, 11-12, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, <https://webpace.princeton.edu/users/mudd/Digitization/MC001.01/MC001.01%20volume%20120.pdf>, accessed April 9, 2013.

with a move from civil liberties as a means of advocating for civil rights, towards civil liberties as its own end. Even so, we should not necessarily assume that this was apparent either to Bogart and other liberals who had turned away from anti-fascist rhetoric, or to more leftist communists and progressives that continued to speak in terms of race and class, even as they invoked civil liberties in their own defense.

Still, the CFA explicitly championed an Americanness defined by “Anglo-Saxon” individualism. During the October proceedings when the CFA’s representatives traveled to Washington, D.C., they presented to the committee a petition for redress of grievances, arguing that “in inquiring into the content of motion pictures...[HUAC was] damaging one of the most important instruments of expression available to the American people.”<sup>94</sup> The CFA charged the committee with being “guilty of a violation of the long established Anglo-Saxon-American principles of individual accountability.”<sup>95</sup> If HICCASP was concerned with presenting the ideal American as one who hailed from any background but ascribed to social democratic thought, the efficacy of the CFA’s arguments, it would seem, would increasingly hinge upon an understanding of Americanism as individualistic and civil libertarian in nature, and one that would be racialized as “Anglo-Saxon.”

The CFA went on to publish a lengthy pamphlet which included the text of the petition, cited a diverse number of newspaper editorials condemning HUAC, and quoted a *New York Times* survey of Americans, the majority of whom appeared to

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<sup>94</sup> Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, 142.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 143.

oppose “congressional investigations.” The pamphlet also reprinted text from the recent report by the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, which had been tasked by President Truman to investigate civil rights issues. Strikingly, the text that the CFA excerpted made no mention of racial or material inequality. It concerned itself exclusively with civil liberties, asserting the importance of limiting federal power but excluding the document’s discussion of “freedom” in terms of “the demands of social welfare.”<sup>96</sup>

In contrast, the ASP would continue to push a more multicultural and social democratic form of politics in the years that followed the Thomas-Rankin exploration into the film industry. For example, in 1948, the organization included in their “Policy and Program” not just a condemnation of HUAC, but also a continued support of the FEPC, anti-lynching legislation, the abolition of poll taxes, and a push for “genuine equality of opportunity for the Negro, the Jew and other minorities in every field of art, science and professional activity.”<sup>97</sup> And whereas the CFA condemned them, HICCASP and the ASP continued to invoke the statements of the Hollywood Ten.<sup>98</sup> In a single pamphlet, the ASP might attack Rankin not only for his role in setting the ten men on the path to prison, and for his “vile racial mouthings,” but also for his record of opposing Roosevelt’s wartime economic controls including

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<sup>96</sup> “Committee for the First Amendment,” pamphlet, box 46 folder 598, WW-MHL; The President’s Committee on Civil Rights, “To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights,” 1947, *Harry S. Truman Library*, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/civilrights/srights1.htm>, accessed Nov. 30, 2013.

<sup>97</sup> “Policy and Program 1948,” pamphlet, box 6 folder 9, HDC-WHS.

<sup>98</sup> Box 4 folder 18, HDC-WHS.

the Office of Price Administration and the FEPC.<sup>99</sup> But in the film industry, such a politics became increasingly untenable. It also became less likely for films with socially democratic solutions to societal problems to appear onscreen.

### **Domestic Antifascism on Screen in *Gentleman's Agreement* and *Body and Soul***

In the hearings of October 1947, HUAC's "friendly" witnesses explicitly targeted a few specific films as evidence of communist infiltration of Hollywood. *Song of Russia* (1944), which praised the United States' wartime ally, was one of them, as was *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Also among the most talked about films in the hearings was *Crossfire*, which had been released to theaters earlier that year, and had marked a change in which anti-Semitism was shown on screen. In the period prior to 1947, Jewish characters were rarely featured in films, and were never shown as victims of prejudice.<sup>100</sup> But 1947 saw the release of two anti-anti-Semitic films, *Crossfire* and *Gentleman's Agreement*. Although each of them were both heavy-handed and limited in the messages that they conveyed, they marked a step forward for those who sought to extend the language of anti-fascism into American movies about domestic concerns in the years following World War II. Hollywood liberals and leftists understood these films as a first step towards

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<sup>99</sup> Freedom from Fear Committee, "Today... Hollywood, Tomorrow... the Whole Country," box 15 folder 11, Albert Maltz Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

<sup>100</sup> Illustrative of the industry's reluctance to portray Jews onscreen is the 1937 film *The Life of Emile Zola*, which obscures the anti-Semitic motivation behind the Dreyfus Affair. See Carr, *Hollywood & Anti-Semitism*, 202, 208.

making films that addressed other topics of social justice.<sup>101</sup> Notably, they represent the effort to move the Popular Front anti-fascist discourse that had for years been circulating within the local activities of Hollywood's antifascists into filmic texts for wider circulation, and the effort to not only show racially progressive narratives, but to also critique aspects of American society in a way that was impossible to do with films like *Hollywood Canteen*. But as the politics of anti-communism shifted the degree to which the language of antifascism could be employed, these films instead stand as both the promising beginning and the abrupt end of the filmic manifestation of Hollywood's Popular Front. Civil rights films would be produced in the years that followed, but they would lack the kind of social democratic vocabulary that argued for collective solutions that the Popular Front films of the immediate postwar period employed, and in several cases, their writers and directors tended to find themselves in similar circumstances as did the Hollywood Ten.

Among contemporary scholars, *Crossfire* is often cited as the richer picture. It's darker in tone, written and directed in the style of *film noir*, and its murder mystery setup makes the film more exciting and masks the film's sense of self-importance, to some degree. It is certainly less didactic than *Gentleman's Agreement*. It's also easier to make connections between anti-fascism, *Crossfire*, and HUAC's 1947 hearings, as two of the four gentiles of the Hollywood Ten were the

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<sup>101</sup> Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*, 359-60; Judith Smith, *Visions of Belonging: Family Stories, Popular Culture, and Postwar Democracy, 1940-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 155.



producer and director of the film, Adrian Scott and Edward Dmytryk, respectively. For these reasons, scholars have spent more time examining *Crossfire* while virtually ignoring *Gentleman's Agreement*.<sup>102</sup> But *Gentleman's Agreement*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1947, better illustrates the degree to which Popular Front anti-fascist ideology was beginning to make its way into motion pictures.

“It’s not just about the poor, poor Jew,” laments John Garfield’s character, David Goldman, when speaking to his journalist friend, Phil Green, the film’s protagonist. The Jewish soldier, back from fighting fascism in World War II, understood the “bigger picture.” Jews had it rough, but so did others. And antifascism, the movie suggests, is not simply a matter of exposing individual prejudicial thoughts towards an ethnic or religious group. Garfield’s character, and others in the movie, makes repeated allusions to a larger struggle. They suggest the banality of prejudice and discrimination, and the degree to which it is interwoven into quotidian behavior and cultural norms. They note the degree to which employment discrimination limits socio-economic mobility. And they even name the names of sitting United States political office holders, accusing them of being vile racists, Representative Rankin chief among them. Such practice was unheard of in Hollywood at the time. *Gentleman's Agreement* was released to theaters just after HUAC’s hearings on Hollywood concluded, but had it been released earlier, it most

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<sup>102</sup> See: Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War*, 93-95; Langdon, *Caught in the Crossfire*.

certainly would have met public denunciation from Rankin and his fellow committee members.

Based on a novel by Laura Hobson published earlier in 1947, *Gentleman's Agreement* tells the story of a genteel journalist, Phil Green, who moves to New York City with his mother and his son to work for *Smith Weekly*. Played by Gregory Peck, Green is given an assignment to write a multiple part series on anti-Semitism. After struggling to find an "angle," he decides to go undercover, that is, pretend that he is Jewish. A divorcée in a new city, Green lets precious few people in on the secret, even insisting that his love interest, later his fiancée, not reveal the truth about his ethno-religious identity to her family. His colleagues at the magazine, exempting his boss, are also kept in the dark.

Green experiences firsthand the ways that Jews are excluded from certain restaurants and hotels. And in trying to help his friend Goldman find housing in the city, he learns of the particular difficulties that Jews had after the war when a shortage in housing presented problems for many Americans. Together, Green and Goldman almost come to blows with an anti-Semitic restaurant patron. The movie continually instructs the viewer that it's not enough to brush off anti-Semitic slurs, that one has to voice his or her disapproval loudly.

Green also uncovers an insidious, banal kind of bigotry in places where he least suspects to find it. Everyone from the superintendent of the building in which he lives to the physician who is taking care of his mother expresses casual anti-Semitic opinions. Miss Wales, his secretary, tells Green of her own troubles getting

hired at *Smith Weekly*, the very magazine that has hired Green to write the story. But after Green forces a change in the magazine's hiring policy, it is Wales who expresses concern that the "kikey ones" will now be hired en masse. She reveals a class-inflected anti-Semitic attitude in which she herself, a Jew, privileges Anglo-Saxon types.

Despite the way in which it deals with the issue of housing, *Gentleman's Agreement* comes up short in its exclusion of any lower-class individuals from its mise-en-scène. It is also devoid of racial minorities. The film does hint towards an equivalence of anti-Semitism and anti-black racism however. The characters speak rancorously, on two different occasions, of Mississippi Senator Theodore Bilbo for example, who was more well-known for being anti-black than anti-Jewish. In one scene, Green rattles off a list of words he finds offensive: not just "yid" and "kike," but also "coon" and "nigger." And in a reference to the civil rights legislation that the left had been arguing for in the wake of the war, the film's characters declare the poll tax as a criminal injustice, almost two decades before the U.S. Congress did.

Unlike *Crossfire*, which saved its speechifying for a few select scenes, *Gentleman's Agreement* presented one long, sustained message, and in doing so, it engaged with the discourse on anti-Semitism from a variety of angles. In one scene, the primary characters encounter a scientist at a dinner party – the scientist's features are clearly modeled after those of Albert Einstein – who engages in a hurried but nuanced speech about identity and the construction of race. He is on a "crusade," he remarks, to deny his Jewishness to those that he encounters, not

because he is ashamed or ambivalent about his identity, but rather because he looks so stereotypically Jewish that such a remark would be a provocation to others to rethink their assumptions about race and “type” (what is commonly called “ethnicity” today). He then casually changes his mind however, telling Green that he must abandon his crusade because to claim Jewishness is a necessary moral principle, at least until anti-Semitism ceases to exist. He explains that Jews today don’t claim to be Jewish because they are religious – he is not – but because the world makes it harder to be one. In another scene, a Jewish executive at *Smith Weekly* tries to put a stop to Green’s project, arguing that to talk about the issue of anti-Semitism would only fan its flames. Here the filmmakers anticipate what was a common argument among Jewish organizations at the time and attempt to head off possible criticism of the film itself.

Upon the film’s release, the *Saturday Review* offered a critique of *Gentleman’s Agreement* that has often been echoed by critics and scholars.<sup>103</sup> The *Review* relayed the story of a stagehand telling Moss Hart, the writer of the screenplay, that he learned a great moral during the shooting of the film. “Henceforth,” said the stagehand, “I’m always going to be good to Jewish people because you never can tell when they will turn out to be Gentiles.”<sup>104</sup> Hollywood Ten member Ring Lardner, Jr. echoed the sentiment that the film was flawed because of its focus on a Gentile

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<sup>103</sup> Otto Friedrich, *City of Nets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 366.

<sup>104</sup> John Mason Brown, “Seeing Things: If You Prick Us,” *Saturday Review*, Dec 6, 1947, 68-71.

victim of anti-Semitism.<sup>105</sup> Hart's story has since become a cliché in *Gentleman's Agreement* criticism.

Critics of the film also suggest that *Gentleman's Agreement* offers little insight into Jewishness beyond suggesting its absolute compatibility with American values, which is a valid criticism. Other critiques are less persuasive, and seem to be based on cursory reads of the film. For example, Steven Carr writes that *Gentleman's Agreement* "condemned anti-Semitism, not because of its prevalence, but because of its aberration." Carr conflates the film with *Crossfire*, the anti-anti-Semitic film that paints anti-Semites as psychopathic murderers, not as everyday average Americans. By contrast, *Gentleman's Agreement* seems almost paranoid in its insistence that prejudice is everywhere. Green finds that people whom the audience assumes are caring and tolerant are really anti-Semitic, even the woman that he has chosen to marry. Others have argued that the film's message is negated by its refusal to discuss the Holocaust, although I would argue that in 1947, the Holocaust most likely did not need to be explicitly conjured for audiences to make connections between European and American forms of anti-Semitism.<sup>106</sup>

The cosmopolitanism evident in the political rhetoric of the postwar Progressive movement is also evident in *Gentleman's Agreement*. In her study *Visions of Belonging*, Judith Smith notes that Hobson was influenced by a cosmopolitan Jewishness. Smith compares the central ideologies of the parents of the novel's author, Laura Hobson: those of "immigrant radicalism" and "conformity,"

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<sup>105</sup> Litvak, *The Un-Americans*, 103.

<sup>106</sup> Carr, *Hollywood & Anti-Semitism*, 281; Friedrich, *City of Nets*, 364-366.

by which Hobson means the desire to assimilate. Socialist and agnostic, Hobson's parents eschewed religious practice and were eager to raise their children as "total Americans."<sup>107</sup> As Smith's book suggests, such a cosmopolitanism, which drove the narratives of "sameness" that sought to combat anti-fascism, also tended to homogenize and erase the cultures of minorities. While this is problematic, it is also important to note the degree to which left-liberals were engaged in a project to create a more cosmopolitan vision of Americanism itself. Furthermore, if the project of creating discourses of "sameness" worked to contest understandings of *race* as natural and immutable, it did not deny the prevalence of discourses that *racialize* and their power in shaping material realities.

The cosmopolitanism of *Gentleman's Agreement* is best articulated at the very end of the film by Green's mother, who was played by the left-leaning and soon-to-be blacklisted Anne Revere.<sup>108</sup> As the narrative strands of the film are tied up, she optimistically reflects: "The world is stirring in very strange ways... Maybe it won't be the American century after all, or the Russian century, or the atomic century. Wouldn't it be wonderful, Phil, if it turned out to be everybody's century, when people all over the world, free people, found a way to live together." Antifascist in provenance, her rhetoric strongly evokes that of Henry Wallace, who had publicly condemned media mogul Henry Luce's calls for an "American Century," and who

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<sup>107</sup> Smith, *Visions of Belonging*, 157. Alan Wald explains such an outlook, which was characteristic of Jewish American leftists, as "Yiddish but not Jewish." Alan Wald, *Trinity of Passion*, 180.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Sklar, *City Boys: Cagney, Bogart, Garfield* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 183; Peter B. Flint, "Anne Revere, 87, Actress, Dies; Was Movie Mother of Many Stars," *New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1990, D21.

would be incessantly red-baited as the Progressive Party candidate for President of the United States the following year. Revere's monologue illustrates Hobson's understanding of Jewishness as a set of symbols that might contribute to socialist and antifascist projects.

*Gentleman's Agreement* was joined by another successful film in 1947, one that also starred John Garfield, and that also attempted to voice Popular Front language through a kind of philo-Semitic filter. *Body and Soul*, while not about anti-Semitism, was in some ways even more in spirit with domestic anti-fascism as well as proletarian Popular Front Jewish literature. The story was written by Communist Party member Abraham Polonsky, at the behest of John Garfield, who was launching his own independent film studio. The actor, who had helped to run the Hollywood Canteen, sponsored a benefit for the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, and had been featured as a member of HICCASP by *Time*, and who would soon later contribute to the "Hollywood Fights Back" broadcasts, undoubtedly hoped to use his studio to produce progressive film content.<sup>109</sup> Like Garfield, Polonsky had been active in the Hollywood anti-fascist politics of the period, and both would be called before HUAC in the early 1950s.

*Body and Soul* was one of 1947's top box office successes.<sup>110</sup> Directed by Robert Rossen, another Communist Party member and future blacklisted (and later, a cooperative witness for HUAC), it tells the story of Charley Davis, an amateur

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<sup>109</sup> Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, Press Release, 1944, *Online Archive of California*, [http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb0779n9bv&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire\\_text](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb0779n9bv&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text), accessed April 7, 2013.

<sup>110</sup> John Cogley, *Report on Blacklisting* (New York: Fund for the Republic, Inc., 1956), 293.

prizefighter played by Garfield. Davis is the son of Jewish immigrants; his father owns and works in a neighborhood candy store in New York City. Struggling to make ends meet, Davis's mother seeks welfare assistance so that she can afford to send Charley to college. But Charley, prideful and eager to make as much as money as possible, rejects the chance to take assistance and instead signs a deal with Quinn, an unscrupulous manager whose loyalties lie with an unscrupulous boxing promoter named Roberts. As his star rises, Charley's poor decisions alienate him from his parents, his fiancée Peg, and his best friend Shorty. Finally, Charley must decide whether or not to reject Roberts's command that he take a dive. If he chooses to throw the fight, he will effectively end his career. But if he fights his hardest, he risks the wrath of Roberts, with whom he has made a Faustian bargain.

As Charley becomes more wealthy, he also becomes estranged from Peg and his mother, who are wary of Quinn and Roberts and see money going to Charley's head. When Charley begins to understand the ways in which he is being exploited, he reconciles with the two during a visit to the old neighborhood. His mother, who is played by Anne Revere, the actress that played Green's mother in *Gentleman's Agreement*, tells Charley that the people there in the old neighborhood are betting on him, people like Shimen, a neighbor with a heavy old-world accent who stops by the apartment. She doesn't approve of gambling, but Shimen explains to her that they aren't betting because they are greedy or opportunistic, but because they are proud of their own kind. After Shimen leaves, Charley finally tells Peg and



his mother that he is going to throw the fight. He'll make Roberts wealthier while betraying people like Shimen.

But Charley's eventual decision to defy Quinn and Roberts finally comes through the intervention of a black character, Ben Chaplin. Ben is a fighter who was once a champion in Quinn's employ. Earlier in the film, when Quinn learns that Ben has taken one too many blows and is suffering from a cerebral blood clot, Quinn and Roberts set the fighter up to take a dive in a championship bout with Charley. They tell Ben that the fight will be fought to a decision, and that his opponent will be restraining himself. But meanwhile, Roberts puts his money on Charley, whom he tells to send Ben to the canvas. Ben suffers a devastating knockout, and when Charley learns the truth, he feels guilty enough to employ Ben as his trainer. His guilt is limited by his desire to make more money though, and so he stays under the yoke of Quinn and Roberts, even when they have Shorty attacked on the streets when he uncovers the truth about the fight that made Davis a champion.

At the conclusion of the film, it is because Ben is in his corner that Charley becomes convinced of the need to defy Quinn and Roberts. Immediately after they share a private conversation in which Ben tells Charley to do the right thing, Ben stands up to Roberts, and in a dramatic monologue, Ben works himself up into such a righteous anger that the stress on his brain causes him to die. Subsequently, in the film's climactic final bout, Charley defies Roberts and Quinn and defeats his opponent. *Body and Soul's* ending is a happy one, but we also know that Charley will

now be a marked man, as his handlers have lost a great deal of money on the fight. Charley's own riches are now most likely gone as well.

Viewed a certain way, *Body and Soul* suffered from the populist tendency to romanticize anti-materialism, a common malady in Hollywood films that persists at present. (Garfield's 1942 turn in *Tortilla Flat* might be another example of this.) Some of the film's dialogue may have mitigated this to a degree, for example, when Charley's parents talk about the hard work involved in being poor, and the way that the charity worker is shown not as an enemy of producerism or individualism, but as a means by which Charley might attain a measure of social mobility without compromising his family's morals. Charley's mother has no qualms with taking assistance if, as she states, she is unable to find enough work on her own. If the logic of popular film generally asserts that attaining money prevents one from living an authentic (albeit ascetic) lifestyle, it is nonetheless portrayed in *Body and Soul* as something that makes life a great deal easier to live.

Furthermore, *Body and Soul* draws from a tradition in Jewish American proletarian literature in which the immigrant or first generation American, seeking to succeed in his adopted country's capitalistic social environment, compromises his morals and steps on those around him in order to climb the social ladder. In this reverse Horatio Alger body of literature, successful or upper-class Jews were derided as "alrightniks."<sup>111</sup> This literary tradition found its way into at least one

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<sup>111</sup> For example: Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (Lanham: Start Publishing, 2013); Samuel Ornitz, *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl: An Anonymous Autobiography* (New York: Boni and

other major Hollywood film of the time, Edgar Ulmer's *Ruthless* (1948), of which two of the three screenplay writers were blacklisted. *Body and Soul* was particularly notable, though, for its urban, noir aesthetic, and its use of Jewish and African American characters that stand under, if not outside of, American capitalism.

More so than any other major film in the studio era, *Body and Soul* wears its Jewishness on its sleeve. Certainly some prior films had suggested its characters were Jewish without explicitly telling the audience so, for example, in the 1946 John Garfield vehicle *Humoresque*. By contrast, *Body and Soul* not only articulates explicitly that its characters are Jewish, but also they speak with old-world accents and a characteristically Jewish intonation. They ask kvetchy, rhetorical questions, for example, when Davis's father laments the state of his business by asking "could I help it that J.P. Morgan refused to advance me credit?" or when his mother, defending her decision to ask for welfare to fund Charley's education, retorts "I did it to buy fancy clothes?" No one speaks like this in *Gentleman's Agreement* or *Crossfire*. The Jews of *Body and Soul* are exclusively urban and poor, but their values as articulated in the film, which are contrasted with those of the greedy Quinn and Roberts, stand as worthy alternatives to those of individualistic American capitalism. Going beyond anti-materialistic virtue, *Body and Soul* articulates a vision of righteousness which derives from allying with those on the bottom of society, like Shimen or Ben, rather than those toward the top, like Roberts.

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Livelihood, 1923); Michael Gold, *Jews Without Money* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1996), Budd Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?* (New York: Random House, 2002).

If we try to understand *Gentleman's Agreement* and *Body and Soul* in the context of the changing shapes of anti-fascist and anti-communist politics, we can see the films as part of a project to extend the language of the World War II Popular Front coalition of antifascist communists, socialists and liberals into the discourse of postwar America. During the onset of the red scare, these films came to be the last gasp of an antifascist political movement in Hollywood. For a moment in the late 1940s, the left in Hollywood appears not as a hopelessly ineffectual contingent of cultural workers subject to an unfeeling mass culture industry, but one that had succeeded, however briefly, in shifting the wartime rhetoric of anti-fascism into the movies. Nevertheless, as we will see in the next chapter, further probing into the rhetoric of the Popular Front reveals the degree to which the appropriation of civil libertarian language served to foster the conditions in which antifascism would be contained during the fifties.

The split between Hollywood liberals and radicals diminished the possibility of either group succeeding in normalizing the use of Popular Front antifascist rhetoric in the years following 1947. John Huston and Humphrey Bogart tried to do so in *Key Largo* (1948), an adaptation of a play originally set in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (a Popular Front cause célèbre), in which Bogart's character returns from World War II with an understanding that the war's end would usher in a new era of global peace, and is disappointed to find that corruption and criminality still exist at home. The film's antagonist, a gangster played by Edward G. Robinson, can be understood as a stand in for domestic fascism, but more likely, as an allusion

to Franklin Roosevelt's repeatedly made comparisons between fascists and gangsters.<sup>112</sup> But while Bogart's character is ultimately stirred to action by the wrongful death of two Native Americans, their deaths are not linked to broader social problems, and the film fails to make any sort of Popular Front or civil rights-minded proscriptions.<sup>113</sup> In real life, Bogart and Huston decided to keep a safer distance from politics, and extricated themselves from the various causes of the postwar period.

Bogart's *Key Largo* costar did the same. In 1952, just after appearing before HUAC, Robinson published "How the Reds Made a Sucker Out of Me" in the staunchly anti-communist *American Legion Magazine*, the most widely read men's magazine of the period.<sup>114</sup> Like Bogart, Robinson sought to portray himself as an innocent naif, a liberal who sought to improve the world by contributing to various social causes tied to the Popular Front. In his article, Robinson invoked his immigrant history, his having come to the United States as a boy from Romania, not to advocate for social justice, but to narrate a tale of American exceptionalism and unwavering patriotism. "Whenever I've been asked: 'Where were you born?' I've always answered: 'I was born on the day I arrived in America,'" Robinson boasted.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> James Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 50, 53-4.

<sup>113</sup> A more successful example of the way that Popular Front narratives sought to equate capitalism and gangsterism is *Out of the Fog* (1941), written by Robert Rossen and starring John Garfield, six years before they worked together on *Body and Soul*. The film's main protagonists are lower class, immigrant workers. Also worth noting is Abraham Polonsky's *Force of Evil* (1948), which starred John Garfield as well.

<sup>114</sup> Edward G. Robinson, "How the Reds Made a Sucker Out of Me," *American Legion Magazine*, October 1952, 11; American Legion Advertisement, *New York Times*, July 23, 1952, 50.

<sup>115</sup> Robinson, "How the Reds Made a Sucker Out of Me," 62.

He trumpeted liberalism as a “generous and tolerant” mindset but studiously avoided discussing any social issues.<sup>116</sup> Finally, Robinson suggested a change not only in his personal political commitments, but to professional ones as well. He boasted that he had just performed across the country, in two hundred and fifty shows, of a stage version of Arthur Koestler’s anti-Stalinist civil libertarian work, *Darkness at Noon*.<sup>117</sup>

John Garfield also felt pressure to publish a renunciation of his prior associations after being called in front of HUAC. In 1951, he wrote and sought to publish “I Was a Sucker for a Left Hook” in *Look Magazine*; the title was an allusion to the communist-penned and directed *Body and Soul*. Even though he was deeply involved in the organizations of the second Popular Front, and he was even married to a member of the Communist Party, he denied having known that any of the people with whom we associated were communists. *Look Magazine* evidently declined to publish the apologia, and in an oft-told (and probably somewhat apocryphal) tragic turn of events, Garfield’s heart gave out due to the pressure of the red scare, and he died in 1952 at the age of thirty-nine. (The story also goes that Canada Lee, the black actor who played Ben Chaplin in *Body and Soul*, died under similarly tragic circumstances the same year.)<sup>118</sup> Like Bogart, Garfield and Robinson made a choice – perhaps the only one they could feasibly adopt – to distance

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>118</sup> Sklar, *City Boys*, 224; Humphries, *Hollywood Blacklists*, 145; Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies*, 185; Thom Andersen, “Red Hollywood” in *“Un-American” Hollywood*, 262; Navasky, *Naming Names*, 340.

themselves from anti-fascism by invoking the language of a less contentious liberalism.

Meanwhile, Hollywood's civil rights activists struggled to resist blacklisting and the dwindling of their organizations' ranks. The web of organizations that tied the industry's ASP chapter to other local groups like the Civil Rights Congress loosened as they each become suspected as being "communist front organizations."<sup>119</sup> In stark contrast to the 1946 *Time* article about ICCASP, a photo essay in *Life* magazine three years later pilloried the NCASP, declaring that its members, naming Arthur Miller, Norman Mailer, Henry Wallace, Charlie Chaplin, Albert Einstein, and Langston Hughes, among others, were communist dupes and apologists for Stalin.<sup>120</sup> Activists like Charlotta Bass were red-baited and subpoenaed to stand before state congressional committees.<sup>121</sup> Bass's newspaper, the *California Eagle*, remained a Popular Front holdout for a few years, championing figures such as Wallace and Paul Robeson, and dismissing anti-communist rhetoric. Bass had embraced the Progressive Party movement in 1948, and wrote about her positive experiences travelling the Soviet Union in the years that followed. But facing increasing pressure, Bass relinquished control of the paper in 1951, and the

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<sup>119</sup> Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 407-409; Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 147.

<sup>120</sup> "Red Visitors Cause Rumpus," *Life*, April 4, 1949, 39-43.

<sup>121</sup> Abdullah and Freer, "Bass to Bass," 336.

paper almost immediately changed its tone, announcing in no uncertain terms its new anti-communist orientation.<sup>122</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Contrary to other narratives of the blacklist, Hollywood's liberals and leftists did not solely understand the fight against them to be in terms of the battle over their own means of production, but rather in terms of a local and national politics rooted in critical understandings of race and class, and informed by an understanding of Americanness that was central to and constituted by wartime antifascist discourse. If antifascists in Hollywood were engaged in what at times seems like a Sisyphean battle for influence against a powerful culture industry that always sought to homogenize and smooth over the rough edges of American society for the sake of profit, they had been encouraged by the war's effect in legitimizing Popular Front politics and were moving to capitalize upon such an effect in both the films they made and the associations they continued to involve themselves in. But when antifascism gave way to anticommunism, the political and cultural ground upon which they stood suddenly shifted. As the very definitions of normative Americanness began to change, the political coalition of which they were a part inside and outside of Hollywood fractured. If some former Popular Front activists like Humphrey Bogart simply stopped opening their big mouths, others abandoned

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<sup>122</sup> "Charlotta Bass Steps Out of Eagle Management," *California Eagle* Jan. 25, 1951, 1; Charlotta Bass, "The Sidewalk," *California Eagle* Apr. 5, 1951, 1; "The Policy of the California Eagle," *California Eagle* Apr. 19, 1951, 4; Bass, *Forty Years*, 162-170, 177-179.



discourses of civil rights for those of civil liberties, and in the process, helped shape new visions of Americanness. The next chapter will explore some of the consequences of the collapse of Hollywood's second Popular Front. If the production of civil rights pictures at the height of the red scare seems to betray the argument that the blacklist resulted in a shift away from progressive filmmaking, an examination in the ways in which racial and ethnic identity became a weapon in the battle over the contested cultural terrain of the cold war will suggest a more complex reality.

## **Chapter Two: Dore Schary's Hollywood: Anti-Communism and Racial Liberalism, 1948-1956**

In 1947, the postwar red scare had come to the film industry in a most conspicuous way, an investigation by the United States House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). After the committee's hearings saw ten Hollywood writers and directors charged with contempt of court, the top members of the Association of Motion Picture Producers (AMPP), including the heads of the studios, formulated the "Waldorf Statement," a policy to blacklist Communists from working in the industry. This policy was only part of a broader set of actions on the part of producers and executives that exemplified an awareness that theirs was an industry under scrutiny. They needed to exhibit a contempt for supposedly un-American activity, which would require not only blacklisting individuals with ties to allegedly "subversive" organization, but also the policing of the content of motion pictures themselves.

The men in charge of the studios wanted to steer away from the socially progressive content that the members of HUAC cited in the hearings of fall 1947. They had singled out films like *Best Years of Our Lives* and *Crossfire* as tainted by communist influence. Eric Johnston, the chairman of the AMPP, explicitly forbade

the industry from producing socially conscious films like *The Grapes of Wrath*.<sup>1</sup> And Hollywood's moguls deliberately sought to produce films which were explicitly anti-communist, in that they featured communists as villains. More broadly, Johnston promoted a kind of filmmaking that understood any filmic critiques of America as undermining the cause of the cold war.

At the same time, an understanding of international politics emerged that saw liberalism – which in the late forties would have been understood as a belief in Fordist capitalism and representative democracy – as a weapon in fighting communism.<sup>2</sup> In order to win the cold war, the United States would have to show not only that it was the mightier power, but that it was also the more enlightened. This required, according to what Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. famously termed the “Vital Center” of American political thought, the amelioration of social ills like racial injustice, at least to the degree that the United States could show that its fundamental values – those of equality and individual liberty – were compatible with modern capitalist society.<sup>3</sup> Cold war liberalism denied the possibility that socialism or communism could improve the lots of Americans. But it also rejected some of the more extreme aspects of right-wing anti-communism. Cold war liberals were usually less enthusiastic about the institution of loyalty oaths, for example, and

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<sup>1</sup> Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 177.

<sup>2</sup> On liberalism, see David Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995); Wendy Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949).

they attempted to distance themselves from the bigotry that often characterized the far right.

Arguably the most powerful, outspoken, cold war liberal in Hollywood during the fifties, Dore Schary is the subject of this chapter. Following the story of Schary and his critics through the mid-1950s offers a chance to examine the role of cold war liberalism in shaping the culture of the blacklist period. This approach offers a corrective to the historiography of the blacklist which often pits an embattled homogeneous “left” against an equally monolithic anti-communist “right.”<sup>4</sup>

More specifically, Schary’s story also illustrates what happens when liberals picked up the mantle of the cause of the civil rights movement during the postwar period. Like many liberals in the fifties, Schary’s past political activities were shaped by close associations with socialists and communists in the thirties and forties, during a period that was characterized by a left-liberal “Popular Front.” In this milieu, the “race question” was often expressed as a problem of socio-economic inequality. After World War II, the coalition dissolved and liberals, perhaps responding to the exigencies of the politics of the early cold war, pushed ahead on civil rights matters but they adopted a more cautious and less class-conscious approach than that which characterized the politics of their former leftist partners. This trend has been fruitfully analyzed by the historians of the recent “cold war civil

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<sup>4</sup> See Lary Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980); Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale, Brian Neve, and Peter Stanfield, eds., *“Un-American” Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Joseph Litvak, *The Un-Americans: Jews, the Blacklist, and Stoolpigeon Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

rights” scholarship, and Schary’s films offer an opportunity to understand how this paradigm worked in the entertainment industry.<sup>5</sup>

Relatedly, Schary’s situation allows us to probe the degree to which matters of race and ethnicity were not simply causes to be fought for or against, but rather discourses around which identities were articulated in ways that changed throughout the early postwar period. If before World War II, policy makers saw little that was utilitarian in addressing matters of racial and ethnic inequality and prejudice, the war introduced a new project in which smoothing over social divisions would aid foreign policy goals. This line of thought continued after the war, and it affected not only the discourse surrounding the “race problem,” but also that of ethnic minorities including American Jews. The language of a tolerant America, undivided by internal divisions, gave liberal Jews space in which they could refute the notion that communism and Jewishness were coincident. Thus in some ways, to trumpet the cause of racial and ethnic progress became less of a matter of exercising left-liberal politics, than it was a means to celebrate American exceptionalism and fight totalitarian ideologies. For some proponents of this line of thinking, Jewish (or any other ethnic) identity was to no longer represent a badge of otherness, as it had for members of the Popular Front. This trend was by no means total, and Dore Schary’s story cautions against drawing hard and fast lines here. But

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<sup>5</sup> See: Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263; Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008); Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement: “Another Side of the Story”* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

it also illustrates the diverse ways in which various parties attempted to utilize discourses of race and ethnicity in the furthering of particular brands of politics.

Finally, this examination of the blacklist era reveals that the outcome of the red scare in Hollywood was a tendency in self-described “liberal” and “anti-communist” films alike – categories that we might presume to be separated by a measure of ideological distance – to hew to certain narrative devices that promoted individualism and reflect a kind of civil libertarian cultural turn. That movies produced by a diverse set of filmmakers would all proscribe similar kinds of governmentalities is not evidence that the red scare in Hollywood did not matter, but rather that the discourse of the cold war prodded the formation of a new consensus among intellectuals and creators of popular culture.

### **Dore Schary in Hollywood**

Dore Schary (né Isadore Schary) first drew widespread attention in the film industry after he wrote the screenplay for *Boys Town* (1938), which dramatized the true story of Father Flanagan, founder of a reform home for wayward youth. The film won the Newark, New Jersey native an Academy Award. *Boys Town* exemplified Dore Schary’s approach to storytelling, which would remain consistent through his exit from the film industry in 1956. As an advocate of “message movies,” he continually expressed his opinion that movies could be meaningful, socially relevant, and at the same time, entertaining and profitable.

By the end of the thirties, Schary had not only made a name for himself in Hollywood, but he had also helped to organize the Los Angeles chapter of the B’nai

B'rith Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a secular Jewish organization, and had begun using it to speak out about the threat of fascism.<sup>6</sup> He also became involved in the labor organizing activities of screenwriters, putting him in closer contact with other politically minded Hollywood writers like Dalton Trumbo and John Howard Lawson.<sup>7</sup> As the United States' entry into World War II facilitated a wartime coalition of New Deal liberals and leftists under the ideology of antifascism, Schary became an active participant, joining the Hollywood Democratic Committee (HDC) when it formed in 1943.<sup>8</sup>

After serving for a year as a vice chairman for the HDC in 1945, he joined the executive council of the organization, which had by then changed its name to the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of Arts, Sciences and Professions (HICCASP) as part of its incorporation into a national network of Popular Front leftist and liberal political organizations.<sup>9</sup> There, Schary had joined in the attack on Ronald Reagan's Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, the anti-communist organization that had formed in response to the HDC. Schary contributed to the Council of Hollywood Guilds and Unions's published critique of the MPA, which painted Reagan and his reactionary colleagues as not sufficiently anti-fascist, as well as "anti-Negro," "anti-democratic," "anti-Semitic," "anti-labor,"

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<sup>6</sup> Dore Schary, *Heyday: An Autobiography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 101; William Raspberry, "Playwright Dore Schary Is Elected Chairman of Anti-Defamation League," *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 1963, A4.

<sup>7</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 109-110.

<sup>8</sup> For more on World War II era antifascist activism in Hollywood, see chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> M.A. Jones to Mr. Nichols, October 29, 1951, 10, Dore Schary File, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D. C. (hereafter cited as DS-FBI).

and “anti-union,” epithets that rang out with Popular Front sentiments.<sup>10</sup> As a result of his activities in the antifascist movement, the FBI began keeping an eye on Schary, noting in 1942 that he had “engaged in the glorification of the Negro race” and had demanded a “second front,” a plea for the United States military to land in Europe that was characteristic of the wartime Popular Front. The FBI also noted several times in their internal documents that Schary appeared to have “contempt for the Southern white man.”<sup>11</sup>

Schary became the head of production for RKO Pictures in 1947, and one of his first projects was the anti-anti-Semitic message film *Crossfire*. *Crossfire*'s producer, Adrian Scott, had been having difficulty convincing RKO to make the picture when Schary took over the production schedule and embraced the project for both its low projected budget and its message of tolerance.<sup>12</sup> Schary remarked in his memoirs that he understood making the film to be a continuation of the work that he did during the war, in which he visited army camps and lectured the soldiers on bigotry and anti-Semitism.<sup>13</sup>

Schary did little to shape the actual content of *Crossfire*, but worked behind the scenes to ensure its production and to convince reluctant Jewish organizations

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<sup>10</sup> “The Truth About Hollywood,” *The Council of Hollywood Guilds and Unions* (1944), 27, DS-FBI.

<sup>11</sup> J. Edgar Hoover to the Attorney General, November 13, 1947, DS-FBI.

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Langdon, “You Can’t Do That: From *The Brick Foxhole* to *Crossfire*” in *Caught in the Crossfire: Adrian Scott and the Politics of Americanism in 1940s Hollywood*, Gutenberg-e edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/langdon/chapter5.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 156.



like the ADL that the film would help, not hurt, the cause of anti-anti-Semitism.<sup>14</sup> He also sparred in print with the American Jewish Committee's *Commentary* magazine, and published another article in the B'nai B'rith's *National Jewish Monthly* to support the film. There, he wrote that "every picture should dare a departure from established patterns and achieve a definite point of view. When you play safe in the making of motion pictures, watch out." He concluded that "no picture is worth making if its makers are indifferent and fail to achieve a solid point of view."<sup>15</sup>

Like others in the Popular Front, who believed that films like *Crossfire* were heralds of a new opportunity to realize antifascism on the screen, Schary connected the problem of anti-Semitism with broader concerns about civil rights. In a 1944 speech at Hollywood High, for example, Schary began an address, noting that upon being asked to speak that night on the question, "Is there a Jewish problem in Los Angeles?," he announced his answer: "Yes... but there is also a Mexican one, a colored one, a Catholic one, [and] a Protestant one."<sup>16</sup> And when HUAC signaled its intentions to investigate possible Communist infiltration of the film industry, Schary led HICCASP in the production of a publication that attempted to discredit one of its members, Mississippi representative John Rankin, not only as a an anti-Semite but

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<sup>14</sup> Langdon, "You Can't Do That"; Schary, *Heyday*, 151-158; Dore Schary to Leon Lewis, Aug. 4, 1947, box 92 folder 9, Dore Schary Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison (hereafter cited as DS-WHS).

<sup>15</sup> Dore Schary, "The Screen Society," *National Jewish Monthly*, October 1947, 60; Otis Guernsey, Jr., "The Playbill: Its Director Defends Lines in 'Crossfire,'" *New York Times* Aug. 10, 1947; Jennifer Langdon, "Is it Good for the Jews?" in *Caught in the Crossfire*.

<sup>16</sup> Speech transcript, May 9, 1944, box 23 folder:"1940s", DS-WHS.

also as a racist who ignored and disenfranchised his large African American constituency.<sup>17</sup>

By 1947, Schary had abandoned HICCASP, and joined a cadre of former members that had expressed a growing wariness of the role of communists in the organization. At the same time, Schary was adamant that the anti-communist politicians that had turned their eyes towards Hollywood were at best opportunistic and at worst anti-Semitic. In fact, leftists noted that of the four gentiles that testified as “unfriendly witnesses” before HUAC in October 1947, two were the director and producer of *Crossfire*, a film that was cited by the committee as a possible source of communist propaganda.<sup>18</sup> Although he was a “friendly” witness before HUAC that month, Schary defended the industry, its message pictures, and the Hollywood Ten in his testimony.<sup>19</sup> For this reason, liberals and leftists in Hollywood were stunned when Schary endorsed the Waldorf statement, the founding document of the Hollywood blacklist, in December. They became even more bitter when that same month, Schary became the recipient of a humanitarian award for *Crossfire*, and Schary, unable to attend the event, sent in his stead Eric Johnston, the President of the AMPP and chief architect of the blacklist.<sup>20</sup> To Schary’s critics, he and Johnston

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<sup>17</sup> See chapter one.

<sup>18</sup> Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial*, 105; “The Other Side of the Story,” Arts, Sciences and Professions Council of the Progressive Citizens of America, Los Angeles, CA, Oct. 29, 1947, box 4, folder 18, Hollywood Democratic Committee Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison (hereafter cited as HDC-WHS).

<sup>19</sup> Jules Dassin to Dore Schary, Nov. 6, 1947, and Schary to Dassin, Nov. 17, 1947, box 100 folder 2, DS-WHS.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston suggested that the blacklist was necessary to forestall an industry boycott. He also publically spoke out against “message” movies. “Inquisition: The Case of the Hollywood Ten,” box 4 folder 18, HDC-WHS; Albert Maltz to L.A. Times Book Review, n.d., box 17 folder 2, Albert

had taken credit for the film while its true auteurs were awaiting their citations for contempt of Congress and subsequent jail terms.

There is evidence that RKO Studios pressured Schary to fall in line ideologically after he gave his testimony to HUAC in October of 1947.<sup>21</sup> He departed RKO for MGM the following summer, convinced that new studio owner Howard Hughes would exert too much oversight over his films.<sup>22</sup> He would remain at MGM, as Vice President in Charge of Production, until 1956. For eight years, he oversaw the studio's entire film schedule. As arguably one of the most powerful and actively political former member of the HDC to *not* become blacklisted, Schary was in a rare position in the fifties to continue the discursive work of Popular Front antifascism in the film industry. Schary was well aware of this; he announced his intentions to make more films with social messages.<sup>23</sup> And in addition to orchestrating MGM's voluminous output, he made certain that his contract with boss Louis B. Mayer included the opportunity to work more intimately on a handful of films, those which he deemed his "personal productions."<sup>24</sup> These films, a subset of the more than thirty that he produced over his career, were notable for the degree to which they reflected not only Schary's liberal politics, but also the constraints that the politics of the early cold war era imposed upon the ways in which he expressed them.

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Maltz Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison; John Cogley, *Report on Blacklisting* (New York: Fund for the Republic, 1956), 74.

<sup>21</sup> Memo to Lou Nichols, October 29, 1951, DS-FBI.

<sup>22</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 172-3.

<sup>23</sup> "Blue Skies, *Time*, Feb. 21, 1949, 104.

<sup>24</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 373.

## Liberal Hollywood's "Race Relations" Film Cycle

The ordeal of the fall of 1947 which birthed the Hollywood blacklist also put a temporary hold on the film industry's plans to move from philo-Semitic films to pro-civil rights films. But Truman's re-election in November 1948 appeared to signal to Hollywood that civil rights films would be acceptable to Americans, and multiple studios competed to produce "prestige" pictures that would address the matter of race relations.<sup>25</sup> As Thomas Cripps has argued, these films, 1949's *Pinky*, *Home of the Brave*, *Lost Boundaries*, and *Intruder in the Dust*, all broke new ground in that the "race problem" was, in one way or another, central to the plots of each film. Whereas previous Hollywood films such as *They Won't Forget* (1937) or *In This Our Life* (1942) made small notes of racial injustice or racialized social inequality, and during World War II, films attempted to show the full breadth of American citizenry in order to marshal all races and ethnicities to the war effort, this was the first time in which Hollywood studios produced films based solely around the societal marginalization of African Americans.

Dore Schary spearheaded MGM's entry into what would become known as the "race picture cycle" or "message movie cycle," choosing to adapt William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* as one of his "personal productions."<sup>26</sup> Schary no doubt felt strongly about the project. The year before its 1949 release, he had

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<sup>25</sup> "Pinky," *History of Cinema: Hollywood and the Production Code* (Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Microfilm, 2006), Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles; Joseph Breen to L.B. Mayer, Dec. 31, 1948, folder: "Intruder in the Dust," Motion Picture Association of America Production Code Administration Records, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.

<sup>26</sup> See Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Thomas Cripps, "The Death of Rastus," *Phylon* 28, no. 3 (1967): 271.

published in *Negro Digest* a plea for African American audience members to support films which addressed civil rights issues or evaded particular cinematic stereotypes.<sup>27</sup> And the theme of *Intruder in the Dust* dovetailed with his work in the ADL, where he had recently given a speech about American Jews' duty to assist race relations. "You can have no Jewish problem where you do not have a Negro problem, a Mexican problem...or any other minority problem," he declared.<sup>28</sup>

*Intruder in the Dust* illustrates some of the successes and limitations of liberal civil rights filmmaking of the time. All of the civil rights films of the period studiously avoided certain stereotypes, most notably the types of characters played by Stepin Fetchit, which might be characterized as "toms" or "coons."<sup>29</sup> *Intruder in the Dust* exemplified the degree to which race-conscious cultural workers, liberal and radical alike, wanted to show blacks with "dignity," a term that was used often in the industry. In the film, adapted from the William Faulkner novel, the African American protagonist Lucas Beauchamp works his own land, which has been passed down in his family since Reconstruction, and insists on accepting no favors from others. On one hand, this portrayal of an African American that is living solidly on the same material ground as the whites in town elides the class issues that are embedded in the "race question." On the other hand, in Beauchamp's refusal to "act like a Negro," as John Stevens, the town lawyer, puts it, Beauchamp's presence

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<sup>27</sup> Dore Schary, "Minorities and Movies," *Negro Digest*, February 1948, 23-4.

<sup>28</sup> "Revival of Ku Klux Klan Reported at Annual Conference of Anti-Defamation League," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, May 7, 1948, <http://www.jta.org/1948/05/07/archive/revival-of-ku-klux-klan-reported-at-annual-conference-of-anti-defamation-league>, accessed Nov. 24, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> For more on filmic stereotypes: Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 1997).

suggests an alternative to the social conventions of the South that perpetuated the existence of a black underclass, even if Beauchamp's refusal to bow, his insistence on dignity, gets him into trouble. John Stevens, after coming to Beauchamp's legal defense when Beauchamp is charged with murder, at one point tells the black man that if only he had said "mister" to people, he wouldn't be in the situation he was in.

Beauchamp is eventually exonerated, but not before the jail he is in is threatened by the presence of a lynch mob. The movie undoubtedly illustrates the irrationality of white hatred towards blacks, and, as Donald Bogle argues, it was an explicit condemnation of "typical" small town America in the South, and one which featured a defiant African American type never before seen onscreen.<sup>30</sup> In the end, the message of the film is blunted by Steven's speechifying. "We were in trouble, not Lucas Beauchamp," he tells his nephew. The film ends with the lawyer and the boy declaring that Beauchamp is the "keeper of [their] conscience."

Dore Schary, like other liberals of the period, was influenced by the writings of a sociologist named Gunnar Myrdal, who published his massive study on race relations, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, in 1944. The book informed politicians, artists, intellectuals alike, and Schary himself would later declare that the work rivaled *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its influence.<sup>31</sup> Myrdal posited that Americans, for the most part, already strongly believed in an egalitarian "American creed" of freedom and democracy, and that American society

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>31</sup> "Weight of Evidence," *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, June 1, 1968, 10B; Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 20.

need only to nurture such latent beliefs in order to solve the problems of race. While it sought to dispel any notion that African Americans were inferior to whites, *An American Dilemma* suggested that racism was a problem of white consciousness, and not of materiality.<sup>32</sup> Although Myrdal's effort was admirable, its analysis was too short sighted, argued African American intellectual Ralph Ellison. "What is needed," he suggested, most likely echoing the general sentiments of the old left, "is not an exchange of pathologies, but a change of the basis of society."<sup>33</sup> Ellison suggested that the role of capitalists in funding Myrdal's study may have precluded a more materialist critique; *An American Dilemma* was funded by the Carnegie Corporation. But Ellison's review was not published until the 1960s.<sup>34</sup>

*Intruder in the Dust* had echoed Myrdal in suggesting that racism is a problem of white men's conscience, to be resolved in their individual hearts. Similarly another motion picture, *Home of the Brave*, based on the Arthur Laurents play about anti-Semitism, proposed the same year that the race problem is one that must be resolved within African American psyches. *Home of the Brave* is an early production by Stanley Kramer, the independent liberal Jewish filmmaker who would, to a degree, pick up the mantle of social message film making after Scharly's exit in 1956. In the film, Moss, a soldier in the Pacific theater of World War II played by black actor James Edwards, has an hysterical breakdown after his fellow soldier and

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<sup>32</sup> Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 20-21.

<sup>33</sup> Ralph Ellison, "An American Dilemma: A Review," in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. John Callahan (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 340.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938-1987* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 248.

longtime friend Finch, played by Lloyd Bridges, is shot in battle. Moss is wracked by guilt because he is glad that Finch was shot, Finch having just prior called Moss a “nigger” by accident, in the heat of battle. A doctor slowly rehabilitates Moss, helping him work through his guilt and “sensitivity” to racial issues. “You’re the same as everyone else,” he tells Moss, and notes that every soldier feels relieved when a fellow soldier is shot instead of himself. The problems of the film are resolved when Moss learns that he has no cause to be “ashamed,” but has every right to be “angry.” Racists need mental help too, the doctor tells him, but the film suggests that the biggest hurdle to racial equality is the psychic legacy of slavery.

The other films of the 1949 race cycle, *Pinky* and *Lost Boundaries*, revolve around the theme of passing, and this causes them to lean more towards the psychological and away from the material in their messages. *Pinky*, which was an enormous box-office success, offers a critique of southern society similar to that of *Intruder of the Dust*, but the use of a white actress in the lead role is incongruous with its sympathies.<sup>35</sup> The low budget, independent *Lost Boundaries* is innocuous; although it touches upon race discrimination in the military, the central problem of the film is that in which the teenage son of a successful New England doctor learns that he is black and undergoes a bit of an identity crisis. Regardless of how hokey, self-important, and circumscribed by the cultural norms of the era they appear, we should not discount the degree to which they were in some ways groundbreaking in their attempts to foreground matters of race relations, and to promote versions of

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<sup>35</sup> Cobbett Steinberg, *Reel Facts: The Movie Book of Records* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 344.



blackness beyond those that were reified in dominant cultural norms and the material realities of many African Americans and other minorities. Nonetheless, it might be instructive to look at another film, situated just outside of the “race relations cycle,” in order to see an alternative to the liberal civil rights film, an alternative that I argue became increasingly obviated as Hollywood’s leftists and liberals adopted more civil libertarian mindsets and shifted towards more individualistic discourses.

*The Lawless* (1950) tells the story of Paul Rodriguez, a Mexican American youth in segregated Sleepy Hollow, a community of agricultural workers in fictional Santa Marta, California. After a series of events in which white teenagers harass Rodriguez and stir up trouble at a Sleepy Hollow community dance, Rodriguez finds himself wanted by the police for accidentally punching a police officer, and stealing an ice cream truck in the panic that ensues. Things go from bad to worse after he is arrested, and an overzealous and bigoted police officer causes the squad car transporting Rodriguez to crash, putting the boy on the run again. Meanwhile, opportunistic news reporters play fast and loose with the events as they unfold, making Rodriguez out to be a dangerous criminal. The press notably racializes Rodriguez and others in Sleepy Hollow, calling them “fruit tramps.”

As the name of the Latino community in the film suggests, *The Lawless* is clearly informed by the Sleepy Lagoon case, in which Mexican American boys were convicted of murder but later freed after a successful appeal aided by the Popular Front. And just as the Popular Front’s Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee targeted

Hearst's publications and their sensationalistic and racist headlines about Los Angeles's Mexican American community, *The Lawless's* Paul Rodriguez's chance at salvation hinges on the actions of a newspaper reporter, Larry Wilder, who fights to counter a voracious and amoral media. As the film charts his Bogart-esque character arc from a disillusioned former idealist to a newly dedicated hero of justice, the white citizens of Santa Marta become whipped into a frenzy, and take to rioting in the streets.

Like *Intruder in the Dust*, *The Lawless* indicts racism, but it does so in a more explicitly realist fashion, and it better recalls the activism of the Popular Front. Perhaps inspired by the neo-realism movement in Italy, both films were shot on location, and in *The Lawless*, director Joseph Losey filled the part of Rodriguez with a local teenager with no previous acting experience, Lalo Rios.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, *The Lawless* suggests that there are factors at play in postwar America that keep minorities from being able to achieve material success. In the first lines of dialogue uttered in the film, Rodriguez and his friend Chavez discuss their desire to do something other than agricultural wage labor, and come to the conclusion that such jobs are only available to "Anglos." Although there are a couple of noble (and wealthy) white characters in the film, Rodriguez and Chavez encounter racism from almost everyone they encounter, from their employer to the white teenagers who goad them into a fight.

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<sup>36</sup> Rios was working as a carpenter when he was discovered for *The Lawless*. Hedda Hopper, "Producers Seek Realism Far From Sound Stages," *Los Angeles Times* June 25, 1950, D4.

When Joseph Breen of the Production Code Administration (PCA) saw the script for the film in October of 1949, he expressed deep concern, although, he noted, officially the film was acceptable under industry guidelines. The PCA, in place since the 1930s, policed the film industry internally as a kind of self-censorship, in order to preclude external moralistic critiques of the industry. *The Lawless*, Breen argued, was a “shocking indictment of America and its people” and a “damning portrayal” of the “American social system,” and would be a “definite disservice” to the country, “its institutions and its ideals.” Breen also expressed concern that the film would provide fuel to “enemies of our system of government.”<sup>37</sup> As a result, the final cut of the film begins with a disclaimer, onscreen titles that read: “This is the story of a town and of some of its people, who, in the grip of blind anger forget their American heritage of tolerance and decency, and become the lawless.” The text suggests that viewers should understand the film’s events as aberrant. They also invoke the language of Myrdal and his “American creed.” But the message is likely to be lost in the subsequent eighty minutes. In fact, the text does little to address the behavior of those who mistreat the inhabitants of Sleepy Hollow before the general furor swells, nor does it address Breen’s concern that the film portrays the news media as dishonest.

Regardless of Breen’s protestations, *The Lawless* received generally favorable reviews. Communist papers the *Daily People’s World* and the *Daily Worker* both

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph Breen to Luigi Luraschi, Oct. 5, 1949, “The Lawless,” *History of Cinema*, reel 26.

lauded the film, as did Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*.<sup>38</sup> Even the reactionary, outspokenly anti-communist, prominently syndicated columnist Hedda Hopper praised *The Lawless*, calling it a “relief from preachy films.” “Commies won’t like this one,” she suggested, noting that its white protagonists are wealthy and its “heavy” is “the average man.”<sup>39</sup> A Communist himself, director Losey would soon later receive a summons from HUAC. Instead of testifying in front the committee, he chose to exile himself to England.

While *The Lawless* and its reception proves in some ways the messiness of trying to draw lines between liberal and left cultural approaches to talking about race and ethnicity, it also suggests an alternative to the more prominent civil rights films of the period. Unlike *Lost Boundaries*, *Intruder in the Dust*, *Pinky*, and *Home of the Brave*, the “problem” of *The Lawless* derives not from the psychological handicaps of minorities or from individual corrupt or racist whites, but from the socio-economic material reality of the United States. As the red scare in Hollywood took a more firm hold in the early fifties, films about the race question did not disappear, but men like Losey were less likely to be able to steer film industry discourse towards these kinds of narratives.

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<sup>38</sup> David Caute, *Joseph Losey: A Revenge on Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 102; Bosley Crowther, “The Screen in Review,” *New York Times* June 23, 1950, 37.

<sup>39</sup> Hedda Hopper, “Drama: Austry Converts Ranch for Underprivileged,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 28, 1950, A6. One wonders if Hopper had read Ayn Rand’s *Screen Guide for Americans*, a pamphlet published by the MPA which instructed filmmakers not to “deify the common man.” Ayn Rand, *Screen Guide for Americans* (Beverly Hills, CA: Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, 1947), 7.

As a member of the Communist Party, Losey might have been influenced by the Party's cultural commissar, V.J. Jerome. Since before the war, Jerome sought to instill in left-wing writers a sense of the utility of mass culture in class struggle, and to direct them in ways of writing that would utilize a framework of Marxist theory, particularly that of historical materialism.<sup>40</sup> Jerome could be dogmatic; When communist writers occasionally bristled at the party's insistence that all of the Hollywood left's work be composed as weapons for class struggle, it was likely that Jerome was the cause of their frustration.

V.J. Jerome understood race to be a central concern of the party's cultural work; that is, he recognized that the problem of race in the United States was that of class as well, and he undoubtedly also saw the utility in making appeals to African Americans in these terms. In a lengthy 1947 speech that was published later that year, called *Culture in a Changing World*, Jerome articulated the need for a culture industry that would combat "bourgeois ideology."<sup>41</sup> Among his targets were existentialist literature and excessive violence in film, as well as the racism that had been on display in films like Disney's *Song of the South* (1946). Jerome attacked the film industry not just for failing to make movies about racism, and for its demeaning portrayals of minorities, but also for not hiring African Americans in the industry's

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<sup>40</sup> Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 58; V.J. Jerome, *Culture in a Changing World* (New York: New Century Publishers, 1947), 65.

<sup>41</sup> Jerome, *Culture in a Changing World*, 6.

craft jobs.<sup>42</sup> But Jerome's most pointed critique of the dominant discourse of race was directed not at the film industry, but at Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*.

Jerome's critique mirrored that of Ralph Ellison's, suggesting that Myrdal's "renunciation of materialism" made it impossible for the book to offer any real solutions.<sup>43</sup> Both Jerome and Ellison also critiqued dominant assumptions that what Myrdal had referred to as the "American Creed" was "Anglo-Saxon" by nature. But whereas Ellison understood Myrdal's work as a corrective to older sociologists like William Graham Sumner, who characterized the Anglo-Saxon as "a pioneer and frontiersman," Jerome saw Myrdal's work as part of a larger discourse, found in popular magazines and literature, that saw "Anglo-Saxon" types as "intelligent, industrious, esthetic, [and] democratic" with others being portrayed as "immoral, selfish, unintelligent, cowardly, lazy, [and] sly."<sup>44</sup> Jerome and Ellison appeared to agree at least that to identify race as a problem in the United States was not enough, but that the solution needed to understand the social-historical forces behind racial inequality did not lie in submitting blind faith to the "American Creed."

In *Culture in a Changing World*, Jerome praised several cultural works that deal with racial discrimination, including Sinclair Lewis's *Kingsblood Royal*, and two works that would later become Hollywood films: Arthur Laurent's aforementioned *Home of the Brave*, and Laura Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement*. But he notes that these ultimately fail to propose radical or class-conscious solutions to social

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 31-33.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Ellison, "An American Dilemma," 332; Jerome, *Culture in a Changing World* 37.

problems.<sup>45</sup> In 1950, Jerome would return to the problem in another lecture and subsequent publication, *The Negro in Hollywood Films*. Following the civil rights film cycle, as well as a proliferation of anti-communist films and a revival of *Birth of a Nation* in movie theaters in 1947 and 1948, he tempered his faith in the possibilities of the new civil rights films with the warning that while they represented a step forward, they were also a “subtle” re-assertion of “white supremacy.”<sup>46</sup> Jerome cited the United States’ government’s attempts, in the face of the delicate cold war context, to appear progressive on the race issue, or in his words, “to beguile the people of the Marshallized countries...as well as to mollify the colonial peoples.”<sup>47</sup> The solution, Jerome suggests, is a “class approach,” but he fails to outline exactly what that would entail in terms of film content. He does note, as did others of the time, that Hollywood had a miserable record of hiring minorities as both creative talent and technical workers, and he argues for the erasure of racial stereotypes on screen.<sup>48</sup>

To suggest that Jerome and Myrdal represent two poles, towards which Hollywood producers and writers would have to choose an exclusive direction in 1947 would be simplifying matters. Both were subject to and authors of discourses about race and Americanness that were circumscribed by the politics of the early cold war. Jerome himself most likely would have critiqued the very kinds of films for which he had advocated, especially those that would have shown black actors as

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<sup>45</sup> Jerome, *Culture in a Changing World*, 53-55.

<sup>46</sup> V.J. Jerome, *The Negro in Hollywood Films* (New York: Masses & Mainstream, 1950), 21-22.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 54, 60-63.

doctors and in other favorable professions but as a result would elide class matters. And as Richard King argues, Myrdal's report had a level of nuance that was ignored by both his liberal champions and Marxist critiques.<sup>49</sup> But Jerome's criticism of Myrdal's "American creed" device and his analysis of Truman's foreign relations directed civil rights policy do appear prescient in light of the aforementioned recent historical scholarship on the liberal constraints of cold war civil rights policy.

Shifting away from Popular Front anti-fascist modes of discourse, that is those that expressed race and class as interconnected, liberals in Hollywood still sought to combat prejudice and race inequality. But severed from their intellectual ties to more radical circles, they abandoned the language of socialism. Whereas Communist and Popular Front writers may have favored a more historically materialistic approach to writing films, the new liberal Hollywood was more likely to stress psychological factors as impediments to racial progress, and would propose individualistic solutions.<sup>50</sup> As the lines around radical critiques of racial inequality were policed by anti-communists, Hollywood films drew influence from Myrdal and from the liberal discourse of "cold war civil rights." The line between civil rights language or policy that was acceptable to cold warriors and that which could be deemed communistic was always contested, contingent, and fraught, but anti-communistic liberal civil rights advocacy allowed some measure of mass cultural space which Hollywood could fill.

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<sup>49</sup> Richard King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004), 23-32.

<sup>50</sup> Howard Fast, *Being Red* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 24.



## **Dore Schary and Cold War Anti-Semitism**

Dore Schary sought to continue to make films about civil rights, ones that would articulate a liberal, Myrdal-influenced stance on the problem of race relations. But he faced increasing opposition from red-baiting anti-communists who appeared to be convinced that he was spreading communism through the movies. The American Legion, and later an organization called the Wage Earners' Committee, embarked on campaigns to picket his films.<sup>51</sup> But the strangest threat that Schary faced was a playwright named Myron C. Fagan.

On April 12, 1948, at the conclusion of his anti-communist play, *Thieves Paradise*, at the El Patio Theater in Hollywood, Myron C. Fagan delivered a dramatic curtain speech. Just as the notorious Senator Joseph McCarthy would do two years later, Fagan claimed to hold in his hand a list of more than 100 communists. Fagan's target was not the U.S. Department, however, but the film industry. Five months after the film industry had vowed to strike communist influence from its pictures, Fagan argued that they were not working fast enough, nor casting a wide enough net. At the El Patio, Fagan was joined by a conspicuous show of support: dozens of American Legionnaires, in full dress, served as ceremonial guards.<sup>52</sup>

Fagan maintained a presence in Hollywood throughout the fifties, his popularity ebbing and flowing. He never gathered a wide following, and never

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<sup>51</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 238-243.

<sup>52</sup> Arch Reeve to Maurice Benjamin and Mendel Silberberg, March 25, 1948, box 12 folder 129, Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles (hereafter cited as AMPTP-MHL); Unattributed report, April 15, 1948, box 12 folder 129, AMPTP-MHL; Arch Reeve to Howard Strickling, April 15, 1948, box 12 folder 129, AMPTP-MHL; David Mark, "'Documentation of the Red Stars in Hollywood' by Myron C. Fagan", report, box 871, folder 8, American Civil Liberties Union Records, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton, NJ.

garnered considerable national media attention. But he did draw notice from prominent writers including Hedda Hopper and Jimmie Tarantino, from California Senator and crusading anti-communist Jack Tenney, and from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and he clearly fostered concern on the part of the MPAA, who referred to him as a “very definite menace.”<sup>53</sup> In the fall of 1949, Fagan reported that 7,000 of the 8,000 printed copies of his self-published book, *Red Treason in Hollywood*, had been distributed.<sup>54</sup> And evidence from his FBI file suggests that his writings provoked interest across the United States.<sup>55</sup> Across all of Fagan’s writings in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Schary emerges repeatedly as a chief target. Schary’s name was on the list that Fagan presented in the spring of 1948, and later Fagan would express the belief that Schary was the “sanctuary for all of” the communists in Hollywood.<sup>56</sup> But Fagan’s story not only helps us understand the forces that were shaping Schary’s actions in red scare Hollywood; Fagan’s story is also more broadly illustrative of the ways that the discourse of anti-communism that found its home in Hollywood equated race-consciousness with radicalism, while at the same time promoting a kind of post-racial, consensus ideology. It also

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<sup>53</sup> Arch Reeve to Maurice Benjamin and Mendel Silberberg, January 24, 1949, box 12 folder 129, AMPTP-MHL; Arch Reeve to Maurice Benjamin and Mendel Silberberg, May 7, 1948, box 12 folder 129, AMPTP-MHL.

<sup>54</sup> L.B. Nichols to Mr. Tolson, September 23, 1949, Myron Fagan File, Federal Bureau of Investigation (hereafter cited as MF-FBI).

<sup>55</sup> The FBI’s files on Fagan are littered with letters written by citizens enquiring about him. The letters originate from California, New York, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, Nebraska, Indiana, Florida, North Carolina, and Washington. Most letters suggest that the writers are enthusiastic about his brand of anti-communism but a few of them are oddly wary that he may actually be a communist himself.

<sup>56</sup> Memo to Mr. Nichols, Oct. 29, 1952, 29, DS-FBI; David Brody to Milton Kilerin, May 29, 1956, MF-FBI.

suggests the messiness of defining Jewishness within this context. In turn, the liberal Jewish response to Fagan's brand of anti-communism helps illuminate the degree to which anti-communists and liberals alike looked to new color-blind narratives of Americanness to broaden the discourse of a postwar American consensus.

Fagan recruited his followers into the Cinema Educational Guild, an organization he started in January of 1949, through which he published newsletters regularly.<sup>57</sup> He delighted in naming the names of Hollywood's alleged Communists, including the members of the "Hollywood Ten," who had been indicted for contempt of Congress for their combative testimony in front of HUAC in 1947. The Hollywood Ten had been blacklisted in no uncertain terms by the film industry's moguls and producers, but Fagan also cited other industry members who still worked as actors, writers, directors, and producers. In *Red Treason in Hollywood*, he named among others, Humphrey Bogart, Henry Fonda, John Garfield, John Huston, Burt Lancaster, Edward G. Robinson, Dore Schary, Orson Welles, and Billy Wilder.<sup>58</sup> By October of 1949, the Cinema Educational Guild's newsletter trumpeted Fagan's success with the headline, "Hollywood Reds on the Run." In its pages, Fagan charted the changing political climate in the film industry by noting the demise of Bogart and Huston's Committee for the First Amendment, and Schary's increasingly defensive and anti-

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<sup>57</sup> California State Senate, "Report of the Senate Fact-Finding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities," no. 11, 1961, 198, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt396n99b3/?brand=oac4>, accessed Nov. 18, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Myron Fagan, *Red Treason in Hollywood* (Los Angeles: Cinema Educational Guild, 1949), 48-49.

communist public stance. Fagan spared no opportunity to take credit for Hollywood's increased anti-communist vigilance.

In "Hollywood Reds on the Run," Fagan also took the opportunity to respond to the critique of local CBS newscaster Chet Huntley, who had suggested that Fagan was "instilling dangerous race-hatreds." Fagan responded that he had no interest in "Race, Color, or Creed"; his only concern was whether or not one was a "true American."<sup>59</sup> But, putting aside what exactly being a "true American" might entail – no doubt its meaning is itself racialized – the FBI as well as the MPAA repeatedly expressed concerns that he was a bigot.<sup>60</sup> In *Red Treason in Hollywood*, Fagan called out the aforementioned anti-anti-Semitic *Gentleman's Agreement*, "because it did the job the Reds wanted done," and elsewhere lamented the production of a stage play because it "urged fraternization between BLACKS and WHITES."<sup>61</sup>

Fagan drew upon a familiar reactionary discourse in which advocating for civil rights was understood to be a means to sow class discontent and disrupt national unity in a time of war. In one of the following year's newsletters, "Reds in the Anti-Defamation League," Fagan devotes his entire forty four page communiqué to attacking the B'nai B'rith's Jewish defense organization. Groups such as the ADL, he suggests, are "bogeymen" which attack anti-communists with the rhetoric of civil

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<sup>59</sup> Myron Fagan, "Hollywood Reds are 'On the Run!'" *Cinema Educational Guild*, October 1949, 17.

<sup>60</sup> MF-FBI; Arch Reeve to Deane Johnson, Jan. 30, 1950, box 12 folder 130, AMPTP-MHL; Arch Reeve to Maurice Benjamin, Aug. 27, 1949, box 12 folder 129, AMPTP-MHL.

<sup>61</sup> Fagan, *Red Treason in Hollywood*, 10, 31.

rights.<sup>62</sup> Fagan insists that he is “utterly oblivious of Race, Color, or Creed.”<sup>63</sup> He continues to lay out his primary charge against the ADL: that when one names the names of anti-communists, he is inevitably branded an anti-Semite by the organization. Fagan then details the story of his meeting with Milton Senn of the ADL’s California chapter. Senn expressed concern, according to Fagan, that of one hundred film industry members whom Fagan named as communist, eighty four were Jewish.<sup>64</sup>

Senn, a colleague of Schary, promised Fagan that the film industry had already begun talking about purging its ranks of communists, and suggested that if Fagan were to refrain from distributing the text of his April 1948 curtain speech, the Hollywood moguls would take care of the matter quietly. Fagan reports in his newsletter that he agreed to do so, but Senn found his speech being distributed by the Patriotic Tract Society, a St. Louis based anti-Semitic and anti-communist organization run by Gerald L.K. Smith, a notorious anti-Semite. As the ADL tried to incorporate Fagan into a plan to sue Smith, Fagan suddenly became incredulous, seeing it as a communist plot.<sup>65</sup>

It appears as though Fagan was feigning his ignorance of and disinterest in Gerald L.K. Smith. The FBI reported that the Cinema Educational Guild had been

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3. <sup>62</sup> Myron Fagan, “Reds in the Anti-Defamation League,” *Cinema Educational Guild*, May 1950,

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 11-17.

founded by Smith.<sup>66</sup> And Arch Reeve of the Motion Picture Producers Association reported that Fagan and Smith appeared onstage together at a Cinema Educational Guild event in December of 1948, although Reeve admits that Fagan and Smith may have had a falling out.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, a few years later, while Fagan was still railing against the ADL, he was also seemingly engaged in a war of words with Smith, whom he denounced for having claimed to be the founder of the Cinema Educational Guild.<sup>68</sup>

Ultimately, the specifics of these associations matter less than the general impact their discourse helped to create. Later in “Reds in the Anti-Defamation League,” after he has cleared his own name from the ADL’s charges of anti-Semitism that allegedly were the result of his unwillingness to throw Smith to the wolves, Fagan targets the ADL for its championing of “devious” civil rights causes, and for “lobbying and propagandizing for FEPC,” the Fair Employment Practices Commission. These causes, argues Fagan, create “dissension, unrest, and strife...in exactly the manner so dear to the heart of Joe Stalin.”<sup>69</sup> He then names the top contributors to the ADL in Hollywood.<sup>70</sup> Fagan concludes by suggesting that “there are no minorities in the American way of life,” and that to say otherwise, as the ADL does, is to tear America, allegedly a “large and happy family,” into “class-conscious, race-conscious, [and] *hate*-conscious” people. America, he suggests, is only a

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<sup>66</sup> January 14, 1949 report, MF-FBI.

<sup>67</sup> Arch Reeve to Maurice Benjamin, August 27, 1949, box 12 folder 129, AMPTP-MHL.

<sup>68</sup> Fox Case to Clarke Wales, July 1 1952, MHL box 12 folder 131, AMPTP-MHL.

<sup>69</sup> Fagan, “Reds in the Anti-Defamation League,” 30.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 32-33.

country of “free individuals.”<sup>71</sup> It is Stalin’s decree, he says, to “set whites against Negroes – Negroes against whites,” to “set Jew against Christian – Christian against Jew”, and ultimately, to “create race hatred.”<sup>72</sup>

Fagan was appropriating a language with which prominent Americans sought to dismiss arguments in favor of civil rights, all while denying the racism that lay under such positions. Such language became abundant in the late forties and early fifties. In *Cold War Civil Rights*, Mary Dudziak shows how such rhetoric surrounding the FEPC, framed in response to the Soviet Union’s critiques of American race problems, “turned the Cold War argument on its head.”<sup>73</sup> Although liberals and conservatives could agree that solving the race issue was, in Dudziak’s words, a “cold war imperative,” anti-communists also understood it as a form of capitulation to a pet communist cause, and as a means to critique American democracy and undermine the project of consensus.<sup>74</sup>

Fagan’s claims regarding the ADL contrast starkly with the expressed goals of the three dominant liberal “Jewish defense” organizations: the ADL, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress). As Stuart Svonkin shows in *Jews Against Prejudice*, these groups sought to fight prejudice by invoking the language of “sameness” that had become a staple of World War II

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 35-37.

<sup>73</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 89.

<sup>74</sup> Mary Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative,” *Stanford Law Review* 41 (November 1988): 61-120.

Popular Front rhetoric. Svonkin also illustrates how cold war anxieties caused them to attempt to distance themselves from materialist analyses of racial problems.<sup>75</sup>

Crises in the early cold war forced Jewish organizations to aggressively refute stereotypes that Jews were communist, for fear that their newly obtained place in the American middle class would be revoked. If understandings of Jewishness among American Jews were always heterogenous and contested, there were nevertheless marked changes in the ways that the formation of new political-cultural coalitions changed the rhetoric of Jewishness among liberals and the left. During the New Deal era, Jews on the left understood their culture to be progressive, pro-labor, and cosmopolitan.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, other Americans believed the same, sometimes to the detriment of those who would be red-baited or stereotyped. As a result, the spy trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, for example, was met with rabid eagerness on the parts of Jewish leaders anxious to perform their anti-communist Americanness.<sup>77</sup> Myron Fagan zeroed in on another crisis, that of the Peekskill riots of 1949.

In August of 1949, the Civil Rights Congress, a Popular Front organization, assembled a concert in New York's Westchester County to benefit the case of the "Trenton Six," black men on trial for murder. That Paul Robeson, a left-wing African

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<sup>75</sup> Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 159-60.

<sup>76</sup> See chapter one, also: Alan Wald, "The Conversion of the Jews" in *Trinity of Passion: The Literary Left and the Antifascist Crusade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 176-209.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Novick cites three other spy cases that provoked anxiety for the American Jewish Committee at the same time as the Rosenberg case. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 92.



American singer known for his involvement with the Civil Rights Congress, was to perform at the event drew the ire of local townspeople and veterans groups. The concert was disrupted by an angry mob, organized in part by local chapters of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, that shouted anti-Semitic and racist epithets at the concert-goers, and the two opposing groups waged battle.<sup>78</sup> Afterwards, the concert was rescheduled for one week later, and again violence broke out when mobs attacked the concertgoers as they left the event grounds. Folk musician Pete Seeger remembers the mob shouting, "Go back to Russia! Kikes! Nigger-lovers!"<sup>79</sup>

Fagan cites the ADL's book, "A Measure for Freedom," for its condemnation of the actions of anti-Communists at the Peekskill riots, and specifically for its description of Paul Robeson as a "Negro singer." By invoking the singer's race, Fagan argues that the ADL is attributing racism as the cause of the riots, rather than the supposedly noble crusade of fighting the communist infiltration of American culture.<sup>80</sup> But for most liberal Jews, the Peekskill riots became either a topic to avoid, or one with which leaders could prove their anti-communist credentials. Michael Staub argues that the Peekskill riots were central in the widening of an "ideological chasm" among liberal Jews, whose institutions moved to distance themselves from the causes of the Civil Rights Congress and any others that might

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<sup>78</sup> Howard Fast, *Peekskill USA: Inside the Infamous 1949 Riots* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006).

<sup>79</sup> Steve Courtney, "Peekskill's Days of Infamy: The Robeson Riots of 1949," *Reporter Dispatch*, White Plains, NY, September 5, 1982.

<sup>80</sup> Myron Fagan, "Reds in the Anti-Defamation League," 33-34.

paint them red, and the increasingly marginalized leftists who understood Jewishness in terms of a race- and class-conscious heritage.<sup>81</sup> Its well worth noting, as Staub illustrates, that members of the black press worked to distance themselves from Robeson. The NAACP's magazine, *Crisis*, denounced the controversy over Peekskill as "Communist fabricated hysteria," and called Robeson an "archenem[y] of civil rights."<sup>82</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Fagan always speaks of the Jews in the third person, and he by and large avoids acknowledging that he is, in fact, Jewish as well.<sup>83</sup> This behavior is suggestive of larger societal anxieties surrounding Jewish identity as it intersected with understandings of Americanness. In "Moscow over Hollywood," a Cinema Educational Guild publication from 1948, author Dan Gilbert suggests that "alien-born aristocrac[ies]" are behind the film industry and the source of communist infiltration.<sup>84</sup> Jewishness, among anti-communist circles, was understood to be linked to foreign, radical ideologies. In a 1956 pamphlet, Fagan himself decried the "Foreign Ideologies [sic]" that he suggests were allowed to proliferate in American politics beginning in 1933, presumably a reference to Roosevelt's inauguration as president. Fagan argues that at this time, "American principles were declared

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<sup>81</sup> Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 28.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>83</sup> A slight exception appears in: Myron Fagan, "Reds in the Anti-Defamation League," 26. Fagan quotes the ADL as having stated that he was "born a Jew," but he neither confirms nor denies it. Elsewhere, Gerald L.K. Smith suggests that those who call Fagan a Jew are guilty of libel. Gerald L.K. Smith to William Ring, April 20, 1950, box 12 folder 130, AMPTP-MHL.

<sup>84</sup> Dan Gilbert, *Moscow Over Hollywood* (Washington, D.C.: Christian Press Bureau, 1948), 12.

obsolete” and the “Foreign Born [sic] became the favored individual.”<sup>85</sup> Just as they were for members of the Popular Front, for Fagan, race and ethnicity were potent signifiers of values and ideologies.

For whatever the reason, Fagan must have had a sense that Jewishness was an identity that held little value for him. And yet, while Fagan’s tactics and rhetoric may have been extreme, increasingly, Jewish organizations and their members joined him in adopting a narrative of American heritage that stressed a coincidence of beliefs in democracy and libertarianism. Especially following the events at Peekskill, this process of “quarantining” one’s identity from the politics of race was rapidly adopted by both Jewish organizations and by liberal Jews in Hollywood, resulting in a shift in the way race was discussed both on and off the movie screen.<sup>86</sup> Arch Reeve, the director of public relations for the MPAA, understood Fagan to have “murdered [their] business.”<sup>87</sup> Schary went to his lawyer to bring a suit against Fagan – his lawyer talked him out of it – and he brought his concerns to the FBI as well.<sup>88</sup> What Reeve and Schary didn’t acknowledge was the way that Fagan’s attacks may have contributed to a larger movement that shifted the discursive terrain upon which the industry produced its films.

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<sup>85</sup> Cinema Educational Guild pamphlet, 1956, MF-FBI.

<sup>86</sup> Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 142-143.

<sup>87</sup> Arch Reeve to Deane Johnson, July 22, 1950, box 12 folder 130, AMPTP-MHL.

<sup>88</sup> Jan. 2, 1954 report, 2, DS-FBI.

## Race and Ethnicity in Anti-Communist Films

In 1949, Dore Schary oversaw the production of two films that were critical of Soviet influence in Europe, *The Red Danube* and *Conspirator*.<sup>89</sup> But by the early fifties, Schary had been resisting pressures for MGM to make a film about the threat of domestic communism. Even after he helped to lead the Motion Picture Industry Council, an organization that was formed by Hollywood anti-communists to protect the industry from charges that might affect the studios' bottom lines, Schary rejected his council colleagues' suggestions that what the film industry needed were more films in which communists were the enemy.<sup>90</sup> Still, other studios were eager to prove their anti-communist credentials.

Anti-communist pictures that were made in the era of the postwar red scare were crude, didactic, and poorly attended in theaters. But filmmakers worked hard not only to argue that communism was a viable threat to the United States, but also to argue that anti-communism was a culture that all Americans could buy into. In doing so, they borrowed the tendency of those in the Popular Front to portray Americans of all races and ethnicities with "dignity." They also sought to smooth over the differences that liberal capitalism reinforced among those of different races

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<sup>89</sup> There is evidence that Schary resisted making *The Red Danube*, but the idea that he lacked enthusiasm may have been spread by Myron Fagan and Hedda Hopper, who were eager to red-bait Schary. See: J. Hoberman, *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2011), 99-100; Myron Fagan, "Hollywood Reds are 'On the Run,'" 6-7.

<sup>90</sup> The Motion Picture Industry Council was formed in 1948 and operated into the fifties. Schary was its first chairman. Motion Picture Industry Council to John S. Wood, Sept. 10, 1951, box 100 folder 4, DS-WHS; Art Arthur to Dore Schary, June 26, 1950 and Dore Schary to Art Arthur, June 30, 1950, box 2 folder: "Miscellaneous Correspondence," DS-WHS; Unclear author to Mr. Nichols, "Memo to Mr. Nichols," Oct. 29, 1951, 29, DS-FBI; Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 370.

and classes. In this way, I argue that liberal message films and the anti-communist pictures of the period aren't so different. Both illustrate the way that the politics of race and ethnicity, and the ways that Americanness were being defined in the early cold war, birthed rationalities to which supposedly disparate ideological forces were in fact both subject. In short, both liberal message films and films about domestic anti-communism sought to solve the problem of race, champion American liberal capitalism, and propose individualistic solutions to society's problems.

*The Red Menace* (1949) was undoubtedly one of the crudest anti-communist films, but it is also highly illustrative of the ways that the politics of race and ethnicity became entangled with those of anti-communism. The movie went to great lengths not only to caricature American communists in ridiculous but perhaps frightful ways, it also made certain to show how Americans of different types could all learn how to be anti-communists. Although the main character, Bill Jones, was of a stock Anglo-Saxon Protestant type, three supporting characters each represented a different minority: black, Irish, and Jewish. Each appeared to be employed as low-level operatives in the front office of the villainous communists' organization. The young Irish woman and African American man are both saved from the influence of communism by a minister and a strong, caring father, respectively. In each case, the film suggests that minorities can be incorporated in the folds of American democracy by rejecting communism. Strangely, no such path is offered for Henry Solomon, the Jewish boy, who jumps out of a window to his death after the communists reject his wish to leave the party.

It appears as though Solomon is meant to represent the writers of the film industry. His quarrel with the party to which he belongs appears midway through the film, when he writes and publishes a Marxist poem that the party decides does not traipse around the intricacies of Marxist doctrine well enough. Solomon is angry that the Communist Party has taken an about face on his work, and here the film recalls the real life debates over art and politics that played out in Hollywood after Budd Schulberg's story, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, was attacked by the party press, or after Albert Maltz published an indictment on the post-Browder Party's demands on its writers to conform to strict ideology.<sup>91</sup> The filmmakers behind *The Red Menace* may have included this nod to the party's past conflicts over art and ideology to justify their own turn towards anti-communist discourse, or to try to score points in an argument with their more progressive counterparts.

Reconciling Solomon's attitudes about race and ethnicity with those of his real life Hollywood counterparts is a less believable endeavor, however. The character sympathizes with the party's attempts to work towards racial equality. But in a dramatic monologue where he rejects communism, he suggests that the party dwells too much on the significance of race. He admonishes the party's leadership for always reminding him that he's Jewish, or that his colleague Molly is Irish and Sam is black. If difference is a matter of concern, his monologue seems to suggest that ignoring it is the best way to combat it. Ironically, because of the

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<sup>91</sup> On the Maltz affair, see John Sbardellati, "'The Maltz Affair' Revisited: How the American Communist Party Relinquished Its Cultural Influence at the Dawn of the Cold War," *Cold War History* 9, no. 4 (Nov. 2009): 489-500.

development of the “quarantine” approach among Jewish organizations and the larger shift towards liberal post-racial discourses, anti-communist movies like *The Red Menace* became the only filmic genre in which Jewishness was made conspicuous onscreen. Jews were most likely to appear in film if they did so in the service of arguments for their invisibility.

The film consistently suggests that not only is it best to ignore difference, but that it’s the American Way. When Father Leary harangues Molly, convincing her to leave the party, he does so by examining the language on American currency. On one side of the coin, the priest notes, are the words “E pluribus unum.” “We’re not Irish, or English, or Jewish, or Russian,” he continues, but American. He turns the coin over, reading “In God We Trust,” arguing that the atheism is what fosters hatred. He contrasts the “class hatred” of communism with “race hatred” of Nazism, suggesting that they are both the result of godless ways of thinking.

We might note that the rhetoric that filmmakers used in deploying the issue of race and ethnicity in anti-communist films contrasts markedly with that of Southern conservatives like John Rankin, who was explored in the previous chapter. His brand of outright racism was never likely to make it onto the screen after the implementation of the industry’s production code, but the appearance of a new kind of “cold war civil rights” discourse came about largely because of liberal, not conservative, attitudes towards racial difference. *The Red Menace*, as well as other anti-communist films of the time, illustrate the degree to which ideas about race and

belonging were not being posed along the lines of nativist or racist anti-communists vs. culturally pluralist communists and progressives.

*The Red Menace* continuously inverts the question of race in order to suggest that communists are themselves racist, and it does so often, in unsubtle, hamfisted ways. When a working class Italian American named Antonio Reachi starts challenging the party line at a party meeting, the local party leader, a severe woman with a German accent, calls him a “Dago” and has him assaulted and killed. When Sam, the African American low level member is convinced by his father to leave the party, another party leader finds out and brushes it off, arguing that they are “wasting [their] time on those African ingrates!” The film attempts to make clear not only that the communist party is authoritarian and dogmatic, but that it is racist too, and thus should have no appeal for those seeking racial justice. In fact, Sam’s father, when his turn to monologue arises, notes the similarity between the past enslavement of African Americans, and the present enslavement of those behind the Iron Curtain. But while slavery for blacks is firmly in the past according to the film, the audience is made to understand that which is under communism is a growing threat.

If the communists of *The Red Menace* advocated societal change, the film then needed to counterpose this with a more “American” solution. The film stresses the importance of religion, both in the case of Irish Father Leary, and in the case of Sam’s father who references his pastor, Deacon Smith. Additionally, the film’s benevolent characters offer solutions that emphasize individual will and self-



governance. Ultimately, the film abandons its ethnic characters for the final twenty minutes, resolving the story by having Bill Jones and his Russian-accented love interest, Nina Petrovka, a disillusioned communist, flee Los Angeles and find refuge in a small town in Texas, where the sheriff instructs them that all will be fine if they settle down, “get hitched,” and start a family.<sup>92</sup> Jones’s concerns at the beginning of the film – that he is a war veteran in need of financial assistance – no longer seem to matter. Audiences may have rejected anticommunist pictures but *The Red Menace* did well for a B-movie, and the elements that went into the film are illustrative of broader trends in the filmmaking of the blacklist era, and give insight into the anxieties that were circulating around the film industry at the time.<sup>93</sup> That anti-communist films would engage so deliberately with matters of race and ethnicity should not be taken for granted by scholars of cold war Hollywood.

The filmmakers behind *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* (1951) also made certain to comment explicitly on race. Very loosely based on the true story of an undercover informer named Matt Cvetic, which had been reported on in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the film follows Cvetic as he works to aid the FBI in taking down a murderous communist cell in Pittsburgh, and as he struggles to maintain family relationships without blowing his cover.<sup>94</sup> Half of the film’s drama comes as

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<sup>92</sup> The sheriff’s prescription fits firmly with the discourse of “domestic containment” that flourished after World War II. See: Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

<sup>93</sup> John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood’s Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 181.

<sup>94</sup> For more on the real-life Cvetic, see Daniel J. Leab, *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.: The Unhappy Life and Times of Matt Cvetic* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

Cvetic's mother and his son find out that Cvetic is a communist. They are repelled by his politics, but Cvetic nonetheless withholds the truth -- that he is only pretending to be a communist -- until his job is done. The other half is delivered by ridiculously devious party members who spy on each other and repeatedly state explicitly the degree to which they don't really believe in class solidarity or workers' rights, and that all of their directives, initiatives, and beliefs come "straight from the Kremlin."

In two notable scenes, the film enlightens its viewers as to the dastardly tactics of the Communist Party with regard to race and ethnicity. The party holds a meeting in which they address African American community members in the audience, in an attempt to court them to the party, and to rile them up in order to cause conflict. After the meeting is over, the communists are excited about the prospect of violence, hoping that the black men will riot, or perhaps, even a kill a white person in rage, after which the subsequent trial would help them raise money. "Those niggers ate it up," brags one party member, explaining their tactics to Cvetic, who then elaborates in a voice over, telling the viewer that what the communists are doing is part of an old party strategy to "divide and conquer." A party member asks Cvetic if he remembers the case of the Scottsboro Boys, who had been charged with raping a white woman in 1931 and were defended by a Communist Party lawyer. The party, he says, raised "nearly two million dollars just to defend those six niggers," noting that they "made a tremendous profit" in the end.

While the communists were certain that they had planted the seeds of discontent and violence, the African Americans appear to reject the radical politics of the meeting, and a couple of people in attendance expressed doubts as to whether the party was really working in their interests. To show racial minorities as too ideologically pliable or susceptible to party influence would have run counter to liberal ideas about portraying them on screen, even if the film's logic suffered as an alternative. It would have also undermined the project of the film in governing the conduct of Americans by modeling ideal behavior. But later, the FBI tells Cvetic that party *had* duped African Americans before, in the 1943 race riots in Harlem and Detroit. "Five negroes were killed," the agent tells Cvetic, suggesting that the violence was a communist plot. "Their death warrants were signed in Moscow." The film makes clear that not only are communists shadowy, criminal, and as in *The Red Menace*, unforgiving of those who want to leave the party once they are members, but also that racial minorities that might seek aid from the party will discover it only to be self-serving and murderous.

Later in the film, when the party secretly foments a wildcat strike at a steel mill -- after all, according to liberal anti-communist logic, American workers, like racial minorities, are fundamentally good citizens unless stirred by alien influence -- party thugs brought in from New York attack union officers who had opposed the strike, using lead pipes. The thugs wrap the pipes in Yiddish language newspapers, causing Eve, a party member who is falling out of love with the party as she falls in love with Cvetic, to exclaim "but those are Jewish newspapers!" Party leaders

respond by explaining the importance of pitting American ethnic and racial groups against each other. Presumably, there are no actual Jewish characters in *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.*, but the film nonetheless suggests that a Jewishness tied to communistic or radical pro-labor sentiment is only the construct of opportunistic alien forces, thus it implicitly asserts a normative American Jewishness just as it does for its working class and African American characters. Of course, Cvetic's own last name marks him as being of Eastern European descent, and he tells the viewer of his Slovenian ancestry in a voice over as the movie begins.

*I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* culminates in Cvetic's testifying in front of HUAC, where he reveals at long last to the public, and to his brother and son who are sitting in the courtroom, that he had been a plant in the Communist Party. Prior to his testimony, his party superiors deliver uncooperative testimony, and they insist on their constitutional liberties and demanding to read from prepared statements which the committee dismisses as an attempt to deliver propaganda to the public. The film makes certain to portray HUAC as well within its rights, and dismisses the invocation of the first and fifth constitutional amendments as devious communist ploys. The events in *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* bore little resemblance to the actual story of Cvetic's time as an FBI informant. But that didn't prevent the film from being nominated for an Academy Award for the best documentary feature of 1951.

At the time of the film's release, Dore Schary had for a few years been serving as the chairman of the Motion Picture Committee of the Los Angeles Jewish

Community Council's Community Relations Committee (CRC). The CRC had been invested with authority by the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC) (and by the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee after the two organizations severed ties from the NCRAC) to house what was informally known as the "Motion Picture Project," an effort of all the major Jewish defense organizations to influence the content of Hollywood films beginning in 1948 and continuing into the 1960s. The Motion Picture Project was an ambitious effort to have the liberal Jewish organizations speak with one voice in its dealings with Hollywood, the voice of Schary's colleague John Stone.<sup>95</sup>

Long a figure in Hollywood, John Stone worked through informal channels by cultivating relationships with studio moguls, producers, and PCA head Joseph Breen. He was tasked with suggesting changes to scripts to make them more philo-Semitic or progressive in their treatments of race relations, but the NCRAC was adamant the Motion Picture Project was not in the business of formally censoring pictures. Stone worked closely with Schary, which occasionally put him in the awkward position of reporting on Schary's films to the Motion Picture Committee. But Stone's reports on the Motion Picture Project reveal a close ideological kinship with Schary on issues of race relations and liberalism.<sup>96</sup>

Stone expressed concern with the anti-communist film cycle, and particularly with *I Was a Communist for the FBI*. The NCRAC and its constituent organizations

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<sup>95</sup> Passim, box 40, National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, New York (hereafter cited as NJCRAC-AJHS).

<sup>96</sup> Box 40, box 44, NJCRAC-AJHS.

made clear their anti-communist politics. But Stone asserted that the film suggested that “Communists were the only group that struggled for liberal causes.”<sup>97</sup> Flexing his muscles, Stone contacted Jack Warner over the matter. He told Warner that the movie indicted anyone who disagreed with HUAC’s tactics, and he also pointed out that events like the Detroit race riots were the result of long-existing racial tensions, not Communist machinations.<sup>98</sup> More than anything else, Stone appeared offended that he hadn’t been able to see the script after Warner had the lead pipe scene inserted into the film.<sup>99</sup> But ultimately, Stone concluded that the incident improved relations between him and Warner’s studio, and he also noted that after seeing *I Was a Communist for the FBI* with what he deemed to be a Jewish audience and then again with a black one, he concluded that everyone enjoyed the film and that they “reacted appropriately.”<sup>100</sup>

Perhaps the most successful of the anti-communist film cycle in terms of box-office numbers, *Big Jim McLain* (1952) starred John Wayne, who was also a co-producer on the film, as a federal investigator for HUAC, charged with rooting out communists in the U.S. territory of Hawaii.<sup>101</sup> As the title character, Wayne uncovers a conspiratorial underground den of communists, while at the same time, giving the audience lessons in American civics and history. He contrasts the un-American communists with the good Hawaiians who had sacrificed during the attack on Pearl

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<sup>97</sup> John Stone, “Report #43,” April 1, 1952, Box 43 folder 7, NJCRAC-AJHS.

<sup>98</sup> Motion Picture Committee to Jack Warner, box 44 folder 3, NJCRAC-AJHS.

<sup>99</sup> John Stone, “Report #30,” May 4, 1951, box 43 folder 6, NJCRAC-AJHS.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Doherty, “Hollywood Agit-Prop: The Anti-Communist Film Cycle, 1948-1954,” *Journal of Film and Video* 40, no. 4 (Fall 1988), 22.

Harbor, for example. And he shows how labor union leaders can work on the side of anti-communism. Like *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.*, *Big Jim McLain* suggests that industrial workers and union members are decent and upstanding members of society. *Big Jim McLain* takes special care to illustrate how unions can function in concert with the American system, as long as it is staffed by vigilant anti-communists; one man who McLain describes as the chief labor man of the islands proudly sports a broken nose, for example, which he earned by fighting a communist. Bookended by scenes in which spies for Moscow plead the fifth amendment, *Big Jim McLain* also portrays HUAC as a force of good. And like *The Red Menace* and *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.*, the film shows how people of all types can behave as good anti-communist citizens.

Towards the conclusion of *Big Jim McLain*, John Wayne's character encounters what appears to be an elderly Jewish man. The man tells McLain about escaping the pogroms of the old country, and coming to Hawaii. He laments that his son has become a communist, and also that his son is ashamed of his real name. In order to try to bring Jews into the fold of liberal American anti-communism, the movie converts the traditionally anti-radical discourse that stereotypes, red-baits, and calls attention to the "foreign" last names of American Jews to one that suggests that communists themselves are anti-Semitic or self-hating.<sup>102</sup> Elsewhere, East Asian and indigenous Hawaiians are carefully shown to be congenial and pro-democracy. And in the final scene of *Big Jim McLain*, the protagonist observes a

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<sup>102</sup> One scholar reads the man as being Polish: Ron Briley, "John Wayne and Big Jim McLain (1952): The Duke's Cold War Legacy," *Film & History* 31, no. 1 (2001), 29.

ceremonial boarding of the U.S.S. Arizona, during which a multi-colored array of soldiers turn to the camera and salute. Notably, the lineup includes both Asian and African American men.

*Big Jim McLain* repeatedly shows how former communists and fellow travelers can atone for their un-American sins with penitent actions. The labor leader with the busted nose fights communists and helps out McLain because he was a communist once too. Another character, an Asian nurse, has sequestered herself at a leper colony, otherwise unable to live with the fact that she was once a member of such an odious cabal as the Communist Party. *Big Jim McLain* does not deal with racial issues as overtly as *I Was a Communist for the FBI* or *The Red Menace*, but it does suggest that not only is it the government's role to fight communism, but that an appropriately anti-communist conduct is required of all citizens who claim Americanness. If Hawaii serves as a kind of frontier setting in which non-normative Americans can claim citizenship, they do so by unequivocally devoting themselves to normative American ideas.

### **Dore Schary's Message Movies**

Before Sidney Poitier became one of the most accomplished and well known African American actors of the twentieth century, he was hired by writer and director Richard Brooks (who had authored the novel *The Brick Foxhole*, the basis for *Crossfire*, a decade prior) for the MGM production *Blackboard Jungle*. As was the case throughout much of the industry, in the early fifties, MGM had instituted a loyalty oath policy, by which workers had to declare that they weren't communists.



Upon joining the production, Poitier was approached by a studio lawyer to swear his loyalty. “Nothing in the world was more offensive,” Poitier recalled. He was no radical himself, but he was interrogated about his friendships with more politically active colleagues like Paul Robeson and Canada Lee. “It drove me wild that these men could see red but couldn’t see black,” said Poitier.<sup>103</sup> (Canada Lee, a veteran of the Federal Theatre Project, had been effectively blacklisted in the early fifties for his civil rights activism.<sup>104</sup>) Poitier lamented the fact that he was awash in a culture “denied [his] personhood” and yet was asking for his loyalty, much the same way that liberal films – like the ones that Poitier would star in – stressed military service and upstanding individual social conduct as the solution to the race problem. Brooks, to his credit, told Poitier, “You know what? Fuck him.”<sup>105</sup>

Poitier’s dilemma illustrates the bounds around which issues of race and ethnicity were acceptable in cold war consensus discourse. Only with stories that emphasized the psychology of racism and the individual achievements of minorities could the “race problem” be raised. Furthermore, the films of the period in general strongly stressed military service as a means to assert Americanness and to deflect claims of one’s subversion. This was less of a problem for the left during World War II, when military service could be understood in the context of the global fight against fascism. But during the cold war, and particularly after the start of the

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<sup>103</sup> Sidney Poitier, *The Measure of a Man: A Spiritual Autobiography* (San Francisco: Harper, 2000), 88.

<sup>104</sup> For more on Canada Lee, see: Mona Smith, *Becoming Something: The Story of Canada Lee* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2004).

<sup>105</sup> Poitier, *The Measure of a Man*, 88-9.

Korean War, the discourse that allowed minorities to make claims on society based on their service in World War II became inverted so as to continually demand their obeisance. Dore Schary's films of the fifties reveal his continued insistence on engaging with matters of social justice, even while he was under attack. But just as was the case with the civil rights films of 1949, they also reveal the difficulty of liberals in the cold war to see, and to articulate, both "red" and "black" at the same time.

In 1951, Dore Schary saw the release of two films that fit his mold of social message filmmaking. Schary had initially imagined the first, *Go for Broke!*, as an exposé of the concentration camps in which Japanese Americans were interned during World War II. But as Schary remembers it, "we felt that in the early years of the Cold War[, such a film] would be a disservice," so he and writer/director Robert Pirosh instead made a film about the 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion and 442<sup>nd</sup> Combat Regiment, military units that fought in Europe and had been composed of Nisei – first generation American-born citizens of Japanese ancestry – some of whom had gone directly from being interned to serving in the U.S. military. The soldiers of the two units were awarded an unprecedented number of combat medals.<sup>106</sup> Schary made certain to cast the film with Japanese American actors, many of whom actually served during World War II. Incidentally, the process of casting veteran Nisei led to minor complaints by Hawaiian Japanese veterans who quibbled with Schary's initial

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<sup>106</sup> Greg Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 208-211.

focus in looking only towards “mainlanders” as possible candidates.<sup>107</sup> *Go For Broke!* performed well at the box office, perhaps due in part to the fact that the film’s advertising downplayed the fact that the film had any kind of tolerance message.<sup>108</sup> (That the posters did not feature figures which looked Japanese, nor did it feature any text which promoted the film as anything other than an exciting war feature, was not lost on Schary, who unsuccessfully lobbied the publicity department for changes.<sup>109</sup>) The film also met success being shown in American occupied Japan.<sup>110</sup>

*Go For Broke!* follows the Nisei soldiers of the 442 as they go from training in the United States to fighting in Italy and France. At the start, the Japanese Americans are put under the command of a newly minted officer, Lieutenant Grayson, a white Texan who is uneasy with his new role as commander of an all Japanese regiment. Over the course of the film, Grayson slowly learns to appreciate the men under his command, and he begins to stand up for them when soldiers in other outfits denigrate the Japanese Americans. Grayson even punches out his friend in the Texas 36th, Sergeant Culley, when their units meet at a bar in France and the blatantly bigoted Culley insists on calling Grayson’s men “Japs.” The movie culminates with the 442’s rescue of the 36th, the so-called “Lost Battalion,” after it becomes trapped behind enemy lines. The Nisei earn the respect of the rescued

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<sup>107</sup> Mabel Thomas to Dore Schary, Feb. 14, 1950, and Dore Schary to Carter T. Barron, March 27, 1950, box 39 folder 9, DS-WHS; Schary, *Heyday*, 227.

<sup>108</sup> Cogley, *Report on Blacklisting*, 296; Ralph Wheelwright to Dore Schary, May 7, 1951, box 39 folder 9, DS-WHS.

<sup>109</sup> Dore Schary to Howard Dietz, April 26, 1951, box 39 folder 9, DS-WHS; Advertisement, *American Legion Magazine*, June 1951.

<sup>110</sup> Robert Vogel to Dore Schary, May 9, 1951, box 39 folder 9, DS-WHS.

Texans, including Culley, and finally the 442nd is shown being awarded its many citations.

The film successfully adopts a rather comic tone for most of the scenes where there is not combat taking place, with some of the Nisei soldiers adopting something like “trickster” roles. But rarely do they refer directly to discrimination or internment. In one late scene however, Sam, a Nisei soldier, receives a letter from home informing him that his brother has been run off of his farm job by a gang of white men. In discussing the incident, another soldier, Chick, suggests that they are all “suckers” for fighting in the war. “We’re good enough to carry rifles,” Sam remarks, “but we’re not good enough to pick sugar beets.” At this moment, the 442 learns that the 36th is caught behind enemy lines, and that Grayson, serving as a liaison to the Texas battalion, is with them, provoking a snide remark from Chick, who expresses his ambivalence about rescuing the Texans. But the film has juxtaposed this scene with that in which Grayson punches his friend and defends the Nisei as “American.” The film’s audience understands that Grayson’s attitudes have matured even if the Nisei haven’t been informed of the fight. As a result, the Nisei appear to be misreading the situation.

The *Daily People’s World’s* response to *Go For Broke!* highlights the limits of a cold war liberal film. The communist newspaper ran a critique of the film which contextualized the story within the contemporary events of the Korean War. The reviewer called *Go For Broke!* “exceedingly devious” in its message placement. The film suggested, according to the *Daily People’s World*, that the appropriate way to

respond to discrimination was to “by showing that you can die as well as the next man.” Thus, “in the context of the current war drive,” according to the *World, Go For Broke!* was an “obvious attempt to woo minorities to the Wall Street war effort.”<sup>111</sup>

The article makes some claims that seem unlikely; for example, it suggests that Nisei soldiers fought not because they wanted to prove their loyalty to their country, but rather because they recognized that World War II was a global fight against fascism. But viewed alongside the aforementioned anti-communist films, all of which seek to find a productive place for minority Americans in ways that might temper radical sentiment, *Go For Broke!* does appear to ask more of minorities than it promises. In other words, the way in which World War II was framed as both a global and local war to fight fascism -- most notably articulated in the “Double V for Victory” campaign of African Americans -- became inverted during the Cold War.<sup>112</sup> If fighting was a means of showing that one deserved equality during World War II, it became a continual test of one’s patriotism and anti-communist credentials during the Korean War. Like the anti-communist film cycle in which Schary refrained from taking part, minorities were to work to defend the American creed rather than see the American creed – or an alternative, more progressive system – work for minorities.

While Schary had begun the project before the outbreak of the Korean War, he still had recognized that a war film was the safest vehicle by which one could talk

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<sup>111</sup> Michael Vary, “‘Go For Broke’ Is a Try to Win Minority Groups to War Effort,” *Daily People’s World* June 11, 1951, 7, in box 39 folder 8, DS-WHS.

<sup>112</sup> See Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2000)..

about Japanese-Americans and civil rights. And ultimately the U.S. Army and MGM did collaborate on a campaign to both sell the movie and recruit men to the war effort, placing thousands of posters in post offices across the country. The posters told Americans both to “Join the U.S. Army NOW” and to “See Go For Broke!”<sup>113</sup> “It would be interesting,” the *Daily People’s World* remarks, “to see a sequel made to this film, showing the Nisei soldier’s return to the West Coast and to the discrimination there.” It continues: “Or, in similar vein, the return of the Negro troops to jimcrow [sic] in the South which, if this film were to be believed, should have been wiped out because the troops ‘proved’ themselves.”<sup>114</sup> If *Go for Broke!* was legitimately asking why Nisei could fight in the war but not pick sugar beets, the Communist paper wasn’t buying it. Schary’s film had in common with liberal anti-communist pictures the tendency to elide issues of causality in favor of a prescription that insisted that if Americans simply saw *past* race, individuals of all types would have the means to succeed in a liberal democratic society. With this kind of prescription, liberal race films could maintain an exceptional understanding of the United States that suited the military and economic aims of the nation, even as they sought to critique ideologies of intolerance. Incidentally, Myron Fagan had a different perspective. Never missing an opportunity to call out Schary, he attacked *Go For Broke!* as a vehicle for communist propaganda.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ralph Wheelwright, “Go For Broke! National Promotion Campaign,” box 40 folder: “Go For Broke - Misc.,” DS-WHS.

<sup>114</sup> Vary, ““Go For Broke’ Is a Try to Win Minority Groups to War Effort.”

<sup>115</sup> Fox Case to Clarke Wales, March 4, 1952, box 12 folder 131, AMPTP-MHL.

As an aside, Scharly was not the only liberal filmmaker to consciously adopt a liberal approach to civil rights in film during the Korean War. Samuel Fuller's films illustrate similar subjectivities. In *The Steel Helmet* (1951), the first film that Hollywood released about the conflict, a multi-ethnic band of soldiers capture a North Korean officer who seeks to disillusion his captors. The officer tries to sow doubt and discontent among the Americans by pointing out to the Nisei American that his people were interned by the very country for whom he was fighting, and the communist similarly asks the African American soldier why he fights for a country that denies him basic rights. As Lary May has noted, writer-director Fuller intended *The Steel Helmet* to have a "downbeat" side that would critique American society.<sup>116</sup> But the captured North Korean officer fails to divide the soldiers. When talking to the African American medic, played by *Home of the Brave's* James Edwards confidently tells the officer that progress is being made, slowly, and that "there's some things you can't rush." Frustrated, the communist prisoner spits in the medic's face, after which he responds in kind by painfully ripping the prisoner's dressing from his wound.

Next, the Nisei, after being told that they "have the same kind of eyes," rejects the notion that he's a traitor. "You're getting sloppy as a con artist," he tells the prisoner, and after beginning to suggest that he'd like to hurt the communist, the Nisei interrupts himself by noting, "in our country we have rules." "I'm an

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<sup>116</sup> Lary May, "Reluctant Crusaders: Korean War Films and the Lost Audience," in *Remembering the "Forgotten War": The Korean War Through Literature and Art*, eds. Philip West and Suh Ji-moon (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 131.

American,” he proudly proclaims, defending his decorated service record in the 442, and telling the prisoner that what happens “at home” is their business alone.

While the North Korean’s attempt at subterfuge raises the issue of civil rights, it is also a trope that had been well defined in broader anti-communist discourse as a typical and specious communist ploy. Fuller’s next Korean War film, *Fixed Bayonets!* (1951) would drop the social commentary and traffic solely in jingoism. Later, another film that Fuller both wrote and directed, *The Crimson Kimono* (1959), would further illustrate the degree to which the filmmaker was subject to liberal civil rights discourse. The protagonist of the film is undone, not by social injustice, but by his own psychological inability to deal with his minority status.

In the spring of 1951, as *The Steel Helmet* was showing in theaters, and MGM was preparing to release *Go For Broke!*, HUAC had once again initiated hearings into possible Communist infiltration of the motion picture industry, for the first time in three and a half years. These hearings would continue into 1953, and would ruin many more careers than did those in the fall of 1947, especially as former communists like Elia Kazan and Edward Dmytryk “named names,” to foster their own professional rehabilitation.<sup>117</sup> But Schary had taken steps that he had hoped would mitigate the personal fallout of the new round of investigations; he began regular contact with the FBI so that he could prove his anti-communist credentials. While the FBI was unlikely to act in any way on Schary’s testimony that would assuage the concerns of Myron Fagan, Jack Tenney, Hedda Hopper, or any other

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<sup>117</sup> Ceplair and Englund, “The Devastation: HUAC Returns to Hollywood,” in *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 361-397.



anti-communists who were smearing Schary publicly, Schary must have assumed that seeing the FBI and telling them his story would serve as some kind of protection.<sup>118</sup>

Schary related his story to an FBI agent in December of 1950, telling him about his participation in various liberal and Popular Front organizations, and stressing the degree to which, he said, he had always been an anti-communist. He expressed particular concern about Myron Fagan and his ability to red-bait liberals, including himself, and mentioned other sources of anti-communist information, including *Red Channels*, a blacklist for the radio and television industries which had been published by former FBI agents in 1950.<sup>119</sup> For their part, the FBI remained suspicious of Schary's motives. "Our information fails to indicate definitely whether he has reformed," one agent remarked, "or whether he has merely been kicked into a semblance of anti-Communism by the exigencies of the movie business in the light of current anti-Communist trends."<sup>120</sup>

Schary's other pet project in 1951, *It's a Big Country*, was a theatrical feature length collection of eight short films, each one independently produced. Schary wrote one of the segments himself, "Minister at Hyde Park," a story about a pastor who learns that Franklin Roosevelt will be attending his congregation.<sup>121</sup> Schary envisioned *It's a Big Country* as a means by which he could push his particular

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<sup>118</sup> SAC Los Angeles to Director FBI, January 2,, 1951, DS-FBI; SAC Los Angeles to Director FBI, October 13, 1951, DS-FBI; Unclear author to Louis Nichols, October 29, 1951, DS-FBI.

<sup>119</sup> SAC Los Angeles to Director FBI, January 2, 1951, DS-FBI.

<sup>120</sup> Memo to Louis Nichols, October 29, 1951, DS-FBI.

<sup>121</sup> Edwin Schallert, "Drama," *Los Angeles Times* Mar. 27, 1950, B7.

liberal vision of America: democratic, egalitarian, tolerant, and diverse. Other segments included a story about a curmudgeon Hungarian immigrant who bristles at the idea that his daughter might date a young Greek man before he learns to accept it, and one about an implicitly Jewish veteran of the Korean War, who returns home to visit his killed friend's mother who expresses implicitly anti-Semitic views but warms to the boy eventually. The only short devoid of dramatization, a brief documentary piece highlighted the accomplishments of African Americans. Only a few shorts avoided didacticism; one for example, featured Gary Cooper comically boasting about the qualities of Texas. In the *New York Times*, Bosley Crowther wrote that *It's a Big Country* was "a cheery, sentimental estimation of life in these United States, warmly wrapped up in the sort of optimism most familiar to Hollywood," and found its "passion and devotion for the good old U.S.A." a bit too "limited and cautious" and lacking in criticism.<sup>122</sup>

The film was given a special award by the Foreign Press Association of Hollywood for "most contribut[ing] to the ideal of unity in the democratic world" but one conservative voice was perturbed by its emphasis on difference.<sup>123</sup> Hedda Hopper, who attacked Schary as a communist periodically in her column in the late forties, suggested that the film, which she inaccurately described as being about "the plight of minority groups," was unnecessary. "What are minority groups?" she sardonically asked. "The Good Book says we were all born equal. If we're willing to

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<sup>122</sup> Bosley Crowther, "The Screen in Review," *New York Times* Jan. 9, 1952, 25.

<sup>123</sup> "Hayward, Wayne Head Movie Poll," *New York Times* Feb. 15, 1953, 79.

work, we can make a fortune. Yes, and find happiness, too.”<sup>124</sup> Hopper’s approach to understanding race was markedly similar to that of Fagan, and that expressed in anti-communist pictures: to acknowledge racial inequality at all was counter-productive and un-American, and one need be suspicious of arguments that seek to draw attention to it, for they are most likely communist-inspired plots. Elsewhere, Hopper did express appreciation in the fact that *It’s a Big Country* was a “flag waver.”<sup>125</sup>

As Crowther notes in his review, the film illustrated a cautiousness and lack of critical awareness. It mirrored *Go For Broke!* in its celebration of ethnic minorities, and its attempt to elide and smooth over problems and inequalities in American society. And unlike anti-communist films which raised Jewishness more explicitly, *It’s a Big Country* resorted to the vague allusions that had plagued Hollywood since the Warner Brothers’ *The Life of Emila Zola* (1937) erased anti-Semitism from French history’s infamous Dreyfus case. To do otherwise perhaps would have suggested an ideological kinship between *It’s a Big Country* and the anti-Semitic films of 1947, which had been condemned by HUAC. Whereas *Crossfire* and *Gentleman’s Agreement* were produced during a time when not only was the Popular Front still invoking Jewishness within the broader context of “domestic anti-fascism” as a means to relate to other underclasses but also groups like the ADL

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<sup>124</sup> Hedda Hopper, “Schary’s Episodic Film Enlists Kelly,” *Los Angeles Times* Dec. 19, 1949, B8; “Hedda Hopper Articles,” box 99 folder 12, DS-FBI; Jennifer Frost, *Hedda Hopper’s Hollywood: Celebrity Gossip and American Conservatism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 133.

<sup>125</sup> Hedda Hopper, “Montalban Will Enact Naturalized Citizen,” *Los Angeles Times* Nov. 7, 1950, B6.

were more likely to partake in anti-fascist activities, now there was little cultural context or institutional support for displaying progressive Jewishness on the screen. Cinematic Jews were only of use to anti-communists.<sup>126</sup> Schary failed, in 1951, to live up to his own demand of 1947 that films should refuse to “play safe.”<sup>127</sup>

Around this time, Schary was receiving an abundance of correspondence from those who took issue with his liberal politics, or otherwise were misinformed in one way or another about his alleged connections to the Communist Party. One filmgoer named Edna Morris wrote Schary around the time of the 1947 HUAC hearings, informing him that “thousands have pledged to keep away” from the movies, and rambling about “the Jewish tribe,” whose “features and tactics betray them.”<sup>128</sup> The letters continued throughout the 1950s, reaching a crescendo in 1951, when HUAC again opened investigations on communism in Hollywood. One repeat letter writer attached flyers and pamphlets from anti-communist and anti-Semitic Gerald L.K. Smith and the Patriotic Tract Society. Letters were frequently anti-Semitic and anti-communist in nature, and some were pages long. One writer, Maurice Weinberg, was particularly succinct though, asking simply: “You are a disgrace to us loyal American Jews. Why don’t you fight the Reds instead of those protecting our Country? [sic]”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> John Stone and others involved with the Motion Picture Project lamented the difficulty in getting Jewish characters on screen in the early to mid-fifties: “NCRAC 1953 Joint Program Plan,” box 44 folder 5, NJCRAC-AJHS; Jules Cohen to Sidney Vincent, May 9, 1956, box 40 folder 4, NJCRAC; “Report #40,” Jan. 7, 1952, box 43 folder 7, NJCRAC-AJHS.

<sup>127</sup> Schary, “The Screen Society.”

<sup>128</sup> Edna Morris to Dore Schary, Oct. 30, 1947, Box 100 folder 2, DS-WHS.

<sup>129</sup> Maurice Weinberg to Dore Schary, Aug. 12, 1954, box 93 folder 10, DS-WHS.

To Weinberg, left wing expressions of Jewishness were a source of shame, just as they were to the defense organizations following the Peekskill riots. Such expressions threatened to undermine the consensus identity that middle and upper class Jews had adopted. Another letter writer who expressed his appreciation for *Go For Broke!* articulated a different perspective on race, Jewishness, and liberalism, though. Writing “from one Ben Brith [sic] to another,” Joseph Shapiro enthusiastically connected the film’s subject matter with the B’nai B’rith’s fight against anti-Semitism.<sup>130</sup> But Weinberg, Schary, and the Anti-Defamation League had by this time all committed to a perspective on civil rights that “quarantined” Jewish Americans from discourses about social problems, and tried to stay a safe distance from any kind of discourse that could be construed as communistic.

The American Legion, Myron Fagan, and Jack Tenney continued to attack Dore Schary throughout the early fifties, and they often attempted to mobilize pickets for Schary’s films. Tenney had organized a group called the Wage Earners Committee, which also picketed films by Stanley Kramer, the noted liberal film producer.<sup>131</sup> Tenney became increasingly vocal about the links between race, ethnicity, and Americanness. By 1954, he had taken to charging his critics with being involved in a Zionist conspiracy. At a meeting in Los Angeles of Christian Nationalist Crusade, in which 600 of his followers reportedly attended, he attacked Schary for calling them “obscene lice” in a speech that Schary made to the B’nai

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<sup>130</sup> Joseph Shapiro to Dore Schary, July 5, 1951, Box 39 folder 8, DS-WHS.

<sup>131</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 243.

B'rith. According to a report prepared by a colleague of Schary's, Tenney repeatedly linked "pro-communism" with "organized Jewry."<sup>132</sup>

It's difficult to quantify what kind of impact such rhetoric had on liberal Jewish organizations and on filmmakers like Schary – although Schary would never again find the kind of support that he found from the ADL in the marketing of *Crossfire* – but it is illustrative of the ways in which Jewishness became implicated in various political claims of anti-communists and liberals, Jews and gentiles. Such rhetoric influenced the "whitening" of anti-communist Jews in the sense that adopting and performing an identity that hewed close to normative Americanness was far more advantageous than following in the paths of communist or socialist Jews, like those in Hollywood's Popular Front as discussed in the last chapter. The American Legion, for their part, offered both carrot and stick; while their members assaulted leftists with anti-Semitic epithets at Peekskill, their magazine – maybe the most widely circulated among men at the time – also published praise of anti-Communist Jewish individuals and organizations.<sup>133</sup>

Under Schary's executive leadership, MGM produced a handful of movies that depicted matters of race or civil rights in various, often disparate ways. In the early fifties, MGM produced orientalist fare like Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1950) and *King*

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<sup>132</sup> "Meeting of Christian Nationalist Crusade," June 9, 1954, box 16 folder "CRC/LA/JCC 1950-1954," DS-WHS.

<sup>133</sup> George N. Craig, "Legion Calls Nationwide 'All American' Conference to Organize for Concerted Action Against Communism," *American Legion Magazine*, Feb. 1950, 29; Victor Lasky, "Americans Against Communism," *American Legion Magazine*, May 1950, 14; Ira Cahn, "Attitude Toward Jews," Letter to the Editor, *American Legion Magazine*, January 1951, 4. According to an ad in the *New York Times*, the American Legion was the "Largest of All Men's Magazines" with a circulation of 2.7 million: Advertisement, *New York Times*, July 23, 1952, 50.

*Solomon's Mines* (1950), a remake of the musical *Showboat* (1951), which featured ambiguous messages about race and miscegenation in the South, and *Bright Road* (1953), an earnest and innocuous story about black children which starred Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte. But Schary himself continued to take on as producer particular "personal productions" that hewed closely to his vision of what message movies should accomplish.<sup>134</sup> Soon after making *It's a Big Country*, he even expressed a desire to adapt Sinclair Lewis's antifascist bestseller *It Can't Happen Here*, which had been successfully produced by the Federal Theatre Project in the thirties but had little chance of being made in red scare era Hollywood.<sup>135</sup> The project never got off the ground. Instead, beginning in 1953, Schary attempted once more to produce a film about prejudice towards Asian Americans.

The result was a film that Schary recalled as "always...one of [his] favorites" and one that he "had to fight to get...made."<sup>136</sup> Based on a short story called "Bad Time at Hondo," *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955) told the story of a World War II veteran, John Macreedy, who arrives in a small southwestern town looking for a man named Kumoko, the father of a Nisei soldier that he had served alongside, only to find that the townspeople had murdered Kumoko after the start of the war. Played by Spencer Tracy, Macreedy almost immediately draws the ire of the local townspeople, who express their dislike of outsiders, and their methods of intimidating Macreedy grow worse as night approaches. Stranded in the town,

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<sup>134</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 373.

<sup>135</sup> John Stone, "Report #38," Dec. 21, 1951, box 43 folder 6, NJCRAC-AJHS.

<sup>136</sup> Manuscript, box 31 folder "Bad Day at Black Rock -- script", DS-WHS.

Macreeedy slowly learns the truth: that a landowner, Reno Smith, who had tried to scam Kumoko into buying a useless farm plot had grown angry when Kumoko succeeded in cultivating the land, and one day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, when Smith had been drinking, he rounded up a posse to scare Kumoko, and ended up killing him in the process. While Macreeedy converts a couple of the townspeople to his side by appealing to their senses of shame and justice, the film ends in a showdown between Macreeedy and Smith and his men.

The film hearkens back to the style of *Crossfire*, in some ways. It centers around a racially motivated crime, and because of this, the problem of race cannot so easily be attributed to a minority member's psychological deficiency. Also, like *Crossfire*, because the victim has been murdered, it features a cast that is entirely devoid of minorities; you never actually see any Japanese Americans onscreen. Perhaps more so than *Intruder in the Dust*, *Bad Day at Black Rock's* greatest accomplishment in its subversion of standard depictions of small town America. Euro-Americans are not depicted as down-to-earth, hardworking, populist heroes, but rather as ignorant and insular villains. The tendency in Hollywood filmmaking had been to lionize small town America in ways that were often racialized, and regionalized, with the South standing in for a pre-modern, idealized America. Of course, such depictions necessarily ignored the history of racial subjugation upon which Southern society was built. These depictions, we might argue, constructed the "Southern white man" that the FBI had mentioned in Schary's file in ways that signified certain racial or political norms. Screenwriter Millard Kaufman, who



would again critique the South in adapting *Raintree County* (1957), would later proudly boast that he was always “left of liberal.”<sup>137</sup> Also apparent to Bosley Crowther and other film critics and audience members was the film’s similarity to *High Noon* (1952), another depiction of a small town in the West in which the people are less than noble.<sup>138</sup> *High Noon*’s writer, Carl Foreman, was blacklisted, and the film is sometimes interpreted as an anti-HUAC allegory.<sup>139</sup>

The cynicism of *Bad Day at Black Rock* also recalled the work of other Popular Front filmmakers. Robert Rossen, who was blacklisted in the early fifties, had written scripts like *They Won’t Forget*, *All The King’s Men* (1949), and *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers* (1946), all of which told stories that sought to expose cracks in the mythological facades of race or class in America.<sup>140</sup> In telling the story of a Yankee schoolteacher in a small Southern town who is accused of murder, *They Won’t Forget* blended allusions to the case of the Scottsboro Boys and that of the lynching of Leo Frank, and ruminated on the cultural differences of the North and South in much the way that Kaufman’s films would. To their credit, Schary, Kaufman, and other filmmakers were persistent in their belief that liberal message pictures could be entertaining as well as meaningful. Their faith in Myrdal’s racial

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<sup>137</sup> Millard Kaufman, “A Vehicle for Tracy: The Road to Black Rock,” *The Hopkins Review* 1, no.1 (2008), 73.

<sup>138</sup> Bosley Crowther, “Screen: Drama at Rivoli,” *New York Times* Feb. 2, 1955, 22; Bosley Crowther, “Minor Characters: Some of the Lesser Performers Stand Out in a Couple of New Films,” *New York Times*, Feb. 6, 1955, X1; “Rare and Rewarding,” *Newsweek* Feb 21, 1955, 94; Box 32 folder: “Correspondence, *Bad Day at Black Rock*, 1954, June 10-1958, Sept. 8,” DS-WHS; Box 32 folder: “*Bad Day at Black Rock* previews,” DS-WHS.

<sup>139</sup> See Jeremy Byman, *Showdown at High Noon: Witch-Hunts, Critics, and the End of the Western* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

<sup>140</sup> For more on Rossen, see: Brian Neve, “The Hollywood Left: Robert Rossen and Postwar Hollywood,” *Film Studies* 7 (Winter 2005): 54-65.

liberalism, on display in *Bad Day at Black Rock*, would be matched by the Supreme Court's decisions in 1954 and 1955 to desegregate public schools "with all deliberate speed."

### **Dore Schary's *Trial***

Schary's other 1955 personal project, *Trial*, would spark more concern among liberals and anti-communists in the film industry. But it also replicated, to a remarkable degree, the narrative about race and anti-communism that films like *The Red Menace* posed. Schary's final pet project for MGM was a kind of amalgam of 1950s message movies. If *Trial* featured the racist townspeople that were indicted in films like *The Lawless* or MGM's *Intruder in the Dust* and *Bad Day at Black Rock*, it was also explicitly anti-communist and strongly exhibited faith in American institutions.

*Trial* was based on Don Mankiewicz's 1955 novel of the same name, but it was a perfect articulation of Schary's expressed beliefs on liberal politics. Glenn Ford, who had become immensely popular after the success of *Blackboard Jungle* earlier in 1955, starred as a young law professor named David Blake, who, looking for real world experience, interns for Barney Castle, a trial lawyer who is defending Angel Chavez, a young Latino boy accused of sexually assaulting and murdering his white female classmate. (Chavez was played by Pete Morales, also from *Blackboard Jungle*.) In their defense of the boy, Blake and Castle are forced to reckon with the anger of the exclusively white community that insists on Chavez's guilt and, in one

scene, forms a lynch mob. *Trial* thus conjured memories of the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial, the immensely popular cause among Hollywood liberals and leftists.

But *Trial* comes with a twist: Barney Castle is a member of the Communist Party, and David Blake eventually determines that Castle is planning to throw the case, to sacrifice his client as a martyr to the Communist cause. Thus, *Trial* depicts two radical extremes as equally destructive: the racist whites calling for Chavez to be lynched, and the communists who are depicted as caring more about their fundraising totals than the real issues surrounding racial and ethnic inequality. Blake successfully exposes the lawyer's plot to sabotage Chavez's case, and Chavez is ultimately sentenced to a brief stint at a reform school. (He is sentenced by an African American judge, played by Juano Hernandez, whom the Communist lawyer denounces as an "Uncle Tom," appointed to the case only to provide a facade of legitimacy.) This conclusion is markedly sunnier than the one in the novel, in which Chavez is hanged.<sup>141</sup> *Trial* appears to be a direct response to John Stone's criticism of *I Was a Communist for the FBI*; it seeks to show how one can be anti-communist and liberal.

*Trial* was met with a series of strange responses. The Production Code Administration expressed such unease with the film's treatment that its representative, Robert Vogel met with Schary and the film's other producer, Charles Schnee, to discuss it in person. According to the PCA's Jack Vizzard, the PCA had concerns beyond its usual admonitions for violence and warnings about keeping

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<sup>141</sup> Bosley Crowther, "Screen: Confused 'Trial,'" *New York Times* Oct. 14, 1955, 21; Don M. Mankiewicz, *Trial* (New York: Harper, 1955).

women dressed; “there was undoubtedly,” he said, “a policy problem.” While *Trial* was “purportedly an anti-Communist story, in that it exposes the perfidy and degeneracy of Party policy and of Party members,” Vizzard wrote in a memo, “there are, nevertheless, certain themes running through this script which cumulatively would seem to add up to what is popularly thought to be the Communist Party line propaganda at the present time.” He was troubled that the film suggests that there should be a “plea for kindness for those who were led down the primrose path of Party activity” before the start of the cold war. Vizzard was likely referring to the character of Abbe Nile, the Communist lawyer Castle’s secretary, who falls in love with Blake. He also expressed displeasure in the portrayal of an overzealous anti-communist state congressional committee, and one senator in particular, who uses the committee as a vehicle to become “King of the Anti-Communists.” Vizzard concludes that this film would be understood as a “subtly Communist vehicle.” Schary, to his credit, declined to make major changes to the script and acknowledged that he would take, in Vizzard’s words, “a calculated risk” in making the film.<sup>142</sup>

Had Vizzard not been so cautious, he might have noted that films like *The Red Menace* and *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* also endorsed forgiveness of un-American transgressions. So did *Big Jim McLain*, although that film put greater stress on the penitence required of former communists and fellow travelers. Nile’s character arc, like that of Nina Petrovka, the woman from *The Red Menace* with

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<sup>142</sup> Jack Vizzard, “Memo for the Files,” March 30, 1955, in “Trial,” *History of Cinema*.

whom the protagonist falls in love, falls firmly within the bounds of acceptable cold war narratives. Still in the context of a film that attempts a non-consensus approach to race, the usual liberal tropes had to be re-interrogated; what worked for other anti-communist films were suspect. Schary would sum up the response to *Trial* with this: “It was a rouser but was abused by the right wing and ignored by the far left because it dared to show that their motives were not always honorable. Mrs. Hopper missed the point of the picture and laid another blast at me. Sam Goldwyn called me to say, ‘Don’t read Hopper. Just keep making pictures like *Trial*.’”<sup>143</sup>

Whereas five years before Hedda Hopper had praised Joseph Losey’s *The Lawless*, she described *Trial* as the “most confusing film of the year,” and expressed frustration with the way that “good and evil” were hard to discern. “It’s said to be anti-Commie,” Hopper wrote, “but I didn’t get the message.” She did express appreciation for Juano Hernandez’s portrayal of the African American judge.<sup>144</sup> In fact, nearly every reviewer made a point to express their appreciation for the black actor’s part. If it was difficult to characterize delinquent minorities and to determine the causes of social injustice, the motivations of bigoted townspeople or zealous radicals, it was easy in cold war America to praise minorities for their individual accomplishments. Juano Hernandez could be lauded for his success as an actor, and the character that he played could be celebrated as both an individual success and as a black judge, an embodiment of the Myrdal’s “American creed.” And such actions did little to tarnish one’s anti-communist credentials.

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<sup>143</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 286.

<sup>144</sup> Collection of Hopper Quotes, Box 99 folder 12, DS-WHS.

The reviews for *Trial* were mixed. Bosley Crowther suggested that the film would have been better had it not included the theme of communism, and concluded that the real “trial” was that which was “imposed on those who have the patience” to sit through the film.<sup>145</sup> Philip Scheuer of the *Los Angeles Times* praised the film’s scope and breadth, however, suggesting that by the end, “everyone, including the whole American people, is eventually on trial.” Happily, “to their credit, the people are vindicated; America is still America.” *Trial* finds the solution to the problems of social justice firmly in liberal traditions and existing legal structures. Scheuer does credit the film for its depiction of a Communist Party fundraiser in which “for once, [communists] are not stereotyped, skulking conspirators” and for its depiction of the enterprising anti-communist senator as an “aristocratic bigot” with “Fascist-fringe followers,” perhaps suggesting that the film’s emphasis on the evils of right-wing intolerance set it apart from earlier anti-communist films like *The Red Menace*.<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, *Variety* wrote that the fundraiser scene drove home the idea that the party acted villainously in real life to “turn obscure victims of local injustice into party pets.” In other words, *Variety* found in *Trial* the same message about race as that which was presented in *The Red Menace* and *I Was a Communist for the FBI*. In fact, the Communist Party in *Trial* is remarkably similar to that in *I Was a Communist for the FBI* in its desire to exploit racial minorities and turn them into martyrs. Still, the combination of the film’s delving into racial intolerance and its use of tropes that had previously appeared in

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<sup>145</sup> Crowther, “Screen: Confused ‘Trial.’”

<sup>146</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, “Legal Drama Hits Peak in ‘Trial,’” *Los Angeles Times* Sept. 4, 1955, C1.

supposed “right-wing” anti-communist films, for whatever reason, made people confused or uneasy.

The NCRAC, ADL, and the AJC were wary about *Trial*, but they appeared to give Schary, their colleague and chairman of the LA CRC’s Motion Picture Committee, the benefit of the doubt. The ADL and the AJC issued a joint memo to their branches expressing concern that the film could be misread as presenting the argument that all organizations which fight for social tolerance are un-American or communists, and asked their members to report back on community responses to the film.<sup>147</sup> One month later, the Los Angeles B’nai B’rith bestowed on Glenn Ford a humanitarian award, among other reasons, for his work in films like *Blackboard Jungle* and *Trial*.<sup>148</sup> But this might reflect less on the organization’s reception of the latter film than on Dore Schary’s influence in the organization, particularly within its Los Angeles chapter, and on Ford’s work for various causes. Incidentally, Jewish organizations might have been even more concerned had Abbe Nile, who was Abbe Klein in the book, not been shorn of her ethno-religious identity and surname.

If Schary had thought that he had triumphed over the most reactionary cultural forces of the cold war, it was a short-lived victory; the confusion surrounding *Trial* may have been a factor in Schary’s being fired the following year. Schary was making profitable pictures; in addition to *Bad Day at Black Rock* and *Trial*, he had also overseen the development of producer Pandro Berman and

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<sup>147</sup> Joint Memo from the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, Sept. 19, 1955, box 16 folder: “Community Relations Council 1955-1958”, DS-WHS; Jules Cohen to Bernstein, et al., Sept. 9, 1955, box 44 folder 11, NJCRAC-AJHS.

<sup>148</sup> “Glenn Ford and Wife Get B’nai B’rith Award,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 24, 1955, 22.

writer-director Richard Brooks's *Blackboard Jungle*, which was hugely successful.<sup>149</sup> But Schary had been told that MGM's board of directors disliked him because of his political activities, the most recent of which was supporting Adlai Stevenson for president.<sup>150</sup> He had also courted controversy for actively defending *Blackboard Jungle* against charges that it was too controversial or that it would hurt the image of the U.S. abroad.<sup>151</sup> In November of 1956, Schary went from being one of the most powerful men in Hollywood to an industry exile.

Ever the New Dealer, his only prominent works of culture to follow would be *Sunrise at Campobello*, a 1958 Broadway play that he wrote about a young Franklin Roosevelt's bout with polio, and its subsequent 1960 movie adaptation. Schary also remained an ardent believer in the cause of civil rights. But if he never abandoned certain Popular Front tenets – particularly, that economic justice and racial justice had to come hand in hand, and that American Jewishness should carry with it a sense of solidarity with underclasses more broadly – his social activism continued to be constrained by dominant liberal norms and his own subjectivity to them. And just as Schary became the chairman of the ADL in 1963, he was faced with having to confront a Jewish politics that was slowly divorcing itself from what the defense organizations called “intergroup relations.” Increasingly disconnected from the pre-

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<sup>149</sup> “‘Blackboard Jungle’ Shapes as Top Metro Release in Some Time,” *Variety* May 18, 1955, 5; “Those ‘Problem’ Pix at Metro Cause Fewer B.O. Problems Than Pure Escapist Fare,” *Variety* Feb. 8, 1956, 1.

<sup>150</sup> Schary, *Heyday*, 5, 276.

<sup>151</sup> “Films ‘Too Timid’ In Tackling Controversial Subjects, Schary Tells NY Sales Execs Club,” *Content* Apr. 27, 1955, in box 2 folder 18, Elizabeth Poe Kerby Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles; Dore Schary to Howard Dietz, Nov. 22, 1954, box 10 folder 115, Richard Brooks Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles (hereafter cited as RB-MHL); Dore Schary to Darryl Zanuck, Jan. 23, 1956, box 9 folder 105, RB-MHL.



war culture of solidarity that tied some Jews to other racial minorities, “is it good for the Jews?” became a mantra for an increasingly vocal subset of American Jews to drown out progressive calls for understanding racial and ethnic history and identity in class-conscious and trans-racial ways.<sup>152</sup> Like other white ethnic minorities, liberal Jews had bought into an American mythology that left little room for supposed “alien” ideologies, those that ran counter to the “American creed.” In the generation that followed, the creed would evolve into neo-conservative and neoliberal understandings of race, class, and Americanness.<sup>153</sup> If Schary had always been swimming against such a current, he and other liberals had also contributed to its swells.

### **Freedomism and “Resistance”**

Perhaps the best articulation of an alternative filmic discourse that failed to flourish in cold war Hollywood is *Salt of the Earth* (1954), which scholars have understood as an exemplary act of resistance on the part of Hollywood’s scattered left. Although the film was picketed and subject to an industry wide boycott, and it did not have a real audience in the United States until its revival in 1965, it has more recently come to garner widespread attention in academic circles.<sup>154</sup> *Salt of the*

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<sup>152</sup> Max Harmelin to Dore Schary, April 9, 1969, and Schary to Harmelin, April 14, 1969, box 99 folder 7, DS-WHS; Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 178-9, 187-8.

<sup>153</sup> See: Melamed, “Making Global Citizens: Neoliberal Multiculturalism and Literary Value” in *Represent and Destroy*, 137-178; Daniel Rodgers, “Race and Social Memory” in *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 111-143; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 203-4.

<sup>154</sup> Tony Shaw, *Hollywood’s Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 146.

*Earth* dramatizes the real-life strike among Latino workers at the Empire Zinc Mine in New Mexico, and features non-professional actors, chief among them Rosaura Revueltas, performing in a film that would never have gained major studio backing. Written, produced, and directed by blacklisted Michael Wilson, Paul Jarrico, and Herbert Biberman, respectively, the film's production was met with protest and violence by anti-union locals and the American Legion.<sup>155</sup> Revueltas was deported by federal investigators before the filming could finish.<sup>156</sup>

*Salt of the Earth* was unmistakably an aberration; it not only resisted the anti-communist discourse of McCarthyism and the racial tokenism of liberal message movies, but it also sought to recover the themes of social justice that had since been supplanted by those of individualism and civil liberties. But if *Salt of the Earth* represented a relatively clear extension of the Popular Front's race and class conscious criticism, other acts of what we might term "resistance" require more delicate analysis. What is understood as resistance by scholars of cold war culture is in fact the product of the contest itself, and is shaped by both by the discursive struggles of the period and by various turns in the construction of historical memory, the latter of which will be further examined in the fourth chapter. Here, we take up the 1956 film *Storm Center* as an example of a liberal response to anti-communist politics that reflects both an intent to resist and the limits by which such an action could be conceived or realized.

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<sup>155</sup> Ellen Baker, *On Strike and on Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, 225-7.

*Storm Center* starred Bette Davis, a former vice chairwoman of HICCASP, in a film role that explicitly critiques American domestic anti-communist witch hunts.<sup>157</sup> The film and its reception speak to the reality that by the mid-fifties, liberals in Hollywood could speak out against anti-communists. But it also illustrates the degree to which anti-anti-communist discourse was circumscribed. The rhetoric of anti-communists like Myron Fagan, Hedda Hopper, and the American Legion ensured that the contest against anti-communism would be held on civil libertarian grounds, not on those of civil rights or economic justice.

In *Storm Center*, Davis plays Alicia Hull, a small town librarian who appears to be beloved by her community because of her passion for the printed word, even as her somewhat stuffy demeanor puts some of its citizens off. Members of the city council, who are facing pressure in the upcoming election season, square off against Hull after they ask her to remove a book, titled *The Communist Dream*, from the shelf. In return, they promise, she will get the funding that the library needs for a new children's wing. Hull at first accedes, but changes her mind and places the book back on the shelf. She lets the council know that she finds the ideas in the book abhorrent, but that she is opposed to censorship all the same. Americans, she argues, should be able to speak, write, and hear unpopular opinions and views. In turn, the council investigates Hull's past and finds that she had supported organizations that had been found to be "fronts" for the Communist Party. Hull shrugs off such associations, remarking that everyone was signing petitions in those

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<sup>157</sup> John Cromwell to Dore Schary, June 29, 1945, box 101 folder 2, DS-WHS.

days, but just the same she resigns in protest over the issue of banning pro-communist literature from the library's shelves.

Hull is redeemed by one of the city council members, Judge Robert Ellerbe. Uneasy from the start with the politics behind the council's decisions, he stands up for Hull's character and notes that her husband was killed during the First World War, emphasizing the sacrifice as a claim for which Hull's Americanness can be validated. After she has been ostracized by the community, Ellerbe invites Hull to speak at the laying of the cornerstone of library's new wing. Here she is confronted not just with gossiping citizens, but also with one particular young boy who is disheartened and confused by Hull's sudden ostracization. The boy, a bookworm at the start of the film, increasingly falls under the spell of his father's casually anti-intellectual and anti-communist rhetoric. In confusion and anger, the boy lights the library on fire, and in a dramatic climax, books burn. At the film's end, the townspeople agree to bring Hull back in order to rebuild the library.

New York *Times* film critic Bosley Crowther charged the film with lacking subtlety, but praised the "purpose and courage of the men who made" it. "They have opened a subject that is touchy and urgent in contemporary life," he wrote. He also praised Davis's performance as Hull.<sup>158</sup> But the film had arrived after the postwar red scare had waned; the famous Army-McCarthy hearings that had censured Joseph McCarthy were two years past. "Not too many years ago," Philip Scheuer of the Los

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<sup>158</sup> Bosley Crowther, "Screen: Storm Center," *New York Times*, October 22, 1956, 25.

Angeles *Times* quipped, “‘Storm Center’ might very well have lived up to its title.”<sup>159</sup> Still, the Catholic Legion of Decency condemned the film, calling it propaganda, although the Daughters of the American Revolution, a typically anti-communist organization, endorsed it.<sup>160</sup> At the Cannes Film Festival, *Storm Center* was awarded the Chevalier de la Barre Prize, given for the best film to celebrate “the cause of freedom of expression and tolerance.”<sup>161</sup> Hedda Hopper remained silent on the film.

The American Legion issued a small protest against the film in the pages of its monthly magazine. In a general notices column, the editor of *American Legion Magazine* expressed incredulity not only at the idea that a film been made in which “superpatriots” were the villains, but also that the State Department, in its fondness for the film’s championing of American civil liberties, had asked the producers to make a one-hour version that might be shown behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>162</sup> Although the American Legion had not followed the civil libertarian turn, anti-communists in the State Department had.

Just like *Trial*, with its “King of the Anti-Communists” character that made the PCA wary, *Storm Center’s* approach to civil liberties contrasted starkly with that of the HUAC scenes in *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* and *Big Jim McLain*, and would most likely not have made it onto the screen in 1951; in fact, the film was first imagined in 1950 but its production was continually postponed for a range of

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<sup>159</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, “Bette Davis Spearheads Attack on Book Burning,” *Los Angeles Times* Sept. 27, 1956, B9.

<sup>160</sup> Louise S. Robbins, *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown: Civil Rights, Censorship, and the American Library* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 146.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>162</sup> “Editor’s Corner,” *American Legion Magazine*, Dec. 1956, 7.

reasons.<sup>163</sup> Whereas the earlier films' HUAC scenes dismiss civil liberties, suggesting that those who invoked them were doing so deviously and thus were most likely guilty, *Storm Center* illustrates the degree to which liberals in the United States were successful in integrating the discourse of civil liberties into broader understandings of freedom and Americanness. Particularly after the demise of Joseph McCarthy's career, HUAC became harder to defend, if not because of its mission than because of its tactics.

*Storm Center* celebrated a normative kind of Americanism, one that had become celebrated in the era's popular westerns: one that was independent and individualistic, but only because these supposedly roguish characteristics themselves were understood to conform to a kind of American mold, an ideal mode of conduct. It championed civil liberties, but stayed away from any matters associated with civil rights. Set in a homogenous small town, it avoided any kind of class, race, or ethnic conflict. And it relied on patriotism in order to dispel any doubts that the main characters (and perhaps, audience members) had before the film's final act. A film such as Dore Schary's *Trial*, on the other hand, courted much greater controversy because of the ways in which it commented on social injustice as opposed to political injustice, even if it framed the former in terms of racial liberalism. If civil liberties became an acceptable kind of discourse by the mid-fifties, it may have been because civil libertarianism was never at odds with "consensus" norms in the first place; on the contrary, it aligned closely with the

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<sup>163</sup> Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War*, 147-148.

“freedom”-saturated rhetoric that framed the cold war. The language of civil libertarianism became a comfortable retreat for former communists and fellow travelers to which they could go to defend their individual rights to work in the film industry.

## **Conclusion**

We tend to understand the entertainment industry blacklist as being driven by an imperious state and thus any kind of civil libertarian or populist rhetoric must be then be understood as resistance. But not only did liberal governmentalizing discourses -- specifically those which appeared in freedomist dress -- emerge from anti-communist citizens and private organizations, so did it appear from liberals, anti-anti-communists, blacklistees, communists, and former fellow travelers. Such a pattern, I suggest, can be better understood if we take into account the conflict between discourses of civil rights (protections by the state) and those of civil liberties (protections from the state). Just as importantly, anti-statism was not necessarily a key component, or even a necessary one, to progressive politics before the cold war, nor was allegiance to a central locus of power important to the culture or the politics of cold war anti-communism. Far more important was allegiance to a certain set of ideas, of principles, of norms and standards of conduct.

Films were never going to save the postwar world. All other variables being controlled, more progressive films -- ones that moved beyond civil libertarian or psychology centered interpretations of social problems -- would have done little to change the minds of Americans and re-orient the meanings that postwar discourse

produced. It is not my intent to make such an argument, but instead to point out that such variables as the authorship of filmmakers or the output of the film industry can never be controlled apart from the discourses to which people and institutions are subject. The events of cold war Hollywood illustrate the degree to which the dominant freedomist discourses of the red scare influenced what films could be made and which could not, and who could make these films, but more importantly, the very ways in which these films were imagined by their proponents and opponents to be complementary to or in conflict with normative “American” ideas.

The discourse surrounding Hollywood, that which addressed Americanness in various ways, reveals the complex nature in which ideas surrounding race, ethnicity, and anti-communism worked in disparate ways. On one hand, in the years of the blacklist, filmmakers and executives in Hollywood were well aware of a “cold war imperative” to show the United States as a paragon of democracy, one where lofty ideals of a colorblind classless society were in the process of being realized. On the other hand, to try to illuminate the social problems of the United States on film was to invite criticism from anti-communists, particular if either the screenplay suggested that racism was endemic to capitalism or deeply ingrained in American society, or if those involved in the film’s production were already tainted by suspicion of being or having been a Communist Party member or fellow traveler. The requisite shift that this required on the part of civil rights organizations, one towards an approach that favored individualistic or psychological solutions to



societal problems, was reflected in the anxiety of American Jews, among others, and resulted in a re-orientation of their approach towards comparative thinking about race and ethnicity. Such a turn made possible a reification of the boundaries of whiteness as it defined a normative model of Americanness and precluded, to a some degree, the development of a discursive space by which alternatives to more individualistic conceptions of liberalism could be envisioned. Race and ethnicity became useful fulcrums by which different interests could all express faith in liberalism. If *Gentleman's Agreement* and *The Lawless* suggested that societal change was necessary, *Lost Boundaries* and *Go For Broke* suggested that the United States already had everything that it needed to solve the "race question." And *Trial* and the anti-communist film cycle alike argued that change would be destructive and un-American.

Whereas other studies of the period of the blacklist in Hollywood have shown the ways in which filmmakers and screenwriters on the left resisted their marginalization through political, legal, and cultural means, I have tried to draw attention to the ways in which such a focus occludes the role of liberals in shaping postwar culture, and to the ways in which rationalities of resistance often coincided with prevailing rationalities of governance. Still, that we can find so many similarities when we juxtapose the rhetoric of liberal civil rights films, anti-communist films, and anti-HUAC allegories is not evidence that the blacklist didn't matter or that the culture industry's material interests trumped ideological and artistic influence. Contemporary neoliberal and civil libertarian rhetoric is not the

result of one side “winning” or “losing” the cultural cold war of the 1950s, or the subsequent culture wars of the late twentieth century, but rather the language was born from the discursive contest itself. The next chapter will find a similar trend in examining blacklistees that found work in television.

### **Chapter Three: Civil Libertarianism in Blacklist Era Television**

In the early fifties, as the Hollywood blacklist that had begun in 1947 spread among a new wave of writers and actors that had been called to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), the blacklist also came to the television industry in New York City. Three former FBI agents formed the anti-communist organization American Business Consultants, and in 1950 published *Red Channels*, a list of 151 writers, artists, and entertainment and media industry members that they suspected of being communists, former communists, or one-time fellow travelers. The television and radio networks, afraid that employing anyone on the list would make them lose sponsors, fired entertainment industry workers en masse, with no apparent prodding or influence from the state.<sup>1</sup>

There was no great dividing line between the film industry and that of television in terms of the blacklist. American Business Consultants published information on film and television workers alike. But whereas scholars have seen the Hollywood blacklist either as an impediment to progressive filmmaking, or have written off the possibility that the old film studio system could ever produce left-liberal films in the first place, those that have written about television have been more likely to cite their medium of study as a site of resistance. In *Cold War, Cool*

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 7-8. For more on American Business Consultants, see David Everitt, *A Shadow of Red: Communism and the Blacklist in Radio and Television* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007).

*Medium*, Thomas Doherty argues that television constituted a form that “utter[ed] defiance and encourage[d] resistance.”<sup>2</sup> More recently, Andrew Falk has argued that television nurtured a progressive form of cultural diplomacy.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I argue that even though television allowed blacklisted writers to work using pseudonyms or “fronts,” their ability to challenge the dominant discourses of the cold war was circumscribed by the powerful strains of libertarianism that had emerged from leftists, liberals, and conservatives. Like their left-liberal counterparts in the film industry, television writers that might have previously written in the lexicon of domestic anti-fascism – a language rooted in the culture of the Popular Front coalition of liberals and leftists of the late thirties and early forties, one that was social democratic and cognizant of the relationship between race and class issues – were more likely to adopt a civil libertarian rhetoric that emphasized individual liberties and autonomy over matters of collective social justice.

Doherty and others are not altogether wrong in seeing effective liberal anti-authoritarian or anti-demagogic discourses emerge from the television news media and entertainment industry during the 1950s.<sup>4</sup> Where my approach diverges is in seeing the “McCarthyist” state as a *means* of governance rather than its origin, and in

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<sup>2</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Justin Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War: American Dissent and Cultural Diplomacy, 1940-1960* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 6, 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Congressional Theatre* by Brenda Murphy is a good example of the focus on criticism of demagoguery and the cold war state during the blacklist period. Brenda Murphy, *Congressional Theatre: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

doing so, understanding that critiques of illiberalism as it was understood – fascism, totalitarianism, witch hunts, show trials, blacklists – did not necessarily work in favor of the social democratic philosophies that had been the target of various red scare progenitors in the first place. In fact, in invoking the concept of “McCarthyism,” the historical subjects of this chapter and contemporary scholars alike not only fostered the tendency to ascribe a large and diverse political phenomenon to the words and actions of one man, but they also reified a focus on the state that elides the more complex ways in which anti-communism worked symbiotically, rather than adversarially, with various forms of liberal governance.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter examines three television shows of the blacklist era: *You Are There* (1953-57), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955-58), and *The Buccaneers* (1956-57). These shows are notable because they were relatively popular, and because their producers staffed the shows almost exclusively with blacklisted writers. In each case, the writers of their respective shows have expressed the belief that they were combating the culture of the red scare with their choices of plots. And historians and television scholars have taken such reminiscences at face value.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> My language here reflects the influence of Michel Foucault’s writings on governmentality. See, for example: Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 286-87; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 77. Also see Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999). Some new works about the the red scare illustrate the “bottom up” nature of anti-communism, for example: Jennifer Frost, *Hedda Hopper’s Hollywood: Celebrity Gossip and American Conservatism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); Colleen Doody, *Detroit’s Cold War: The Origins of Postwar Conservatism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> For example: Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War*, 204; Everitt, *A Shadow of Red*, 192-195; Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight: The Hollywood Blacklistees in Film and Television, 1950-*

Their stories provide vehicles for us to examine the discourse of the period from a more critical perspective, with an eye towards not just how the medium of television may have moved “left” or “right” due to the red scare, but rather to how the very conceptions of what constituted these categories shifted. Just as in Hollywood, the discourse of civil libertarianism provided left-liberals a means to fight the forces of their own marginalization, but not without replacing language that was common in Popular Front organization of the 1940s, language that advocated political justice as well as structural economic justice and that understood racial problems to be matters of class as well.

### **The Televisual “Guerrilla Warfare” of *You Are There***

On April 5, 1953, television viewers tuned in to CBS at six o’clock to see news anchor Walter Cronkite announcing a breaking story: the Spanish conquistador, Hernan Cortes was invading the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan. After hearing from news correspondents who interviewed Cortes, the Spanish governor of Cuba, and Dona Marina, Cortes’s slave and translator, and captured on camera an impassioned plea by Emperor Montezuma in which he condemned Cortes for taking Tenochtitlan’s riches as well its way of life, Cronkite offered his own damning commentary on the conquest. Cronkite would continue, appearing weekly at the same time, to report on significant events. A couple of weeks later, for example, he reported on the trial of Galileo Galilei, an astronomer who had fallen victim to a Catholic inquisition that

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2002 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 86; James Chapman, “*The Adventures of Robin Hood* and the Origins of the Television Swashbuckler,” *Media History* 17, no. 3 (2011): 274.

had deemed him a heretic because of his belief in a heliocentric model of the universe.

Cronkite was hosting the weekly television show *You Are There*, a popular half-hour drama that presented reenactments of historical events. Airing from 1953-1957, the show was critically lauded and shown in classrooms across the country. The format of the show consisted of the voices of actual CBS newsmen interviewing historical actors as significant events in American and world history played out in front of the camera. *You Are There* proved to be a stepping stone for several people in the film and television industries; besides Walter Cronkite's role as host and narrator, Paul Newman and Rod Steiger appeared on the show, and Sidney Lumet directed most of its episodes, along with assistant director John Frankenheimer.

But the architects of the show, *You Are There's* writers, would spend the rest of the fifties working in the same manner under which they wrote for the show: in secret, and treated as pariahs amidst a culture that had deemed them un-American. Abraham Polonsky, Walter Bernstein, and Arnold Manoff were blacklisted from working in the United States film and television industries in the late forties and fifties, as part of an anti-communist hysteria that swept the country as the cold war began. These writers submitted their scripts with the names of other people, "fronts," who had agreed to assist blacklisted writers find work. Polonsky, Bernstein, and Manoff did not see the opportunity to write for *You Are There* as just work, however. They seized the chance to narrate historical events on television as

an opportunity to conduct “guerrilla warfare” against what Polonsky and many others referred to as “McCarthyism.”<sup>7</sup> The content of the show, they believed, would constitute a form of radical political action.

Neither Polonsky nor Manoff had intended to pursue employment in the television industry prior to the blacklist period, and Bernstein had only been writing television for a brief period of time. Prior to that he had been writing for the *New Yorker* after working for *Yank*, an Army newspaper, during World War II.<sup>8</sup> Manoff, after having published a novel, had success in writing New York theater.<sup>9</sup> And Polonsky had achieved success in academia as well as popular art, having taught English and practiced law in the thirties, contributed scripts to the radio show, *The Goldbergs*, published a novel, and written two feature Hollywood films, one of which he directed.<sup>10</sup>

Bernstein’s name appeared in *Red Channels* in June 1950.<sup>11</sup> Polonsky was subpoenaed by HUAC the same year, appearing before the committee as an “unfriendly witness” in April of 1951.<sup>12</sup> Polonsky refused to recant and “name

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<sup>7</sup> Jeff Kisseloff, ed., *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* (New York, Viking, 1995), 421; Walter Bernstein, *Inside Out: A Memoir of the Blacklist* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 233. Polonsky is particularly fond of characterizing *You Are There* as a guerrilla war. See: Abraham Polonsky, “Archive of American Television Interview,” *Archive of American Television*, July 6, 1999, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/abraham-polonsky>; Walter Bernstein, “Archive of American Television Interview,” *Archive of American Television*, July 21, 2004, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/walter-bernstein>.

<sup>8</sup> Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 125-131.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 208.

<sup>10</sup> Polonsky, “Archive of American Television Interview”; Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *A Very Dangerous Citizen: Abraham Lincoln Polonsky and the Hollywood Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Polonsky’s film *Body and Soul* (1947) is discussed in the first chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Bernstein, “Archive of American Television Interview.”

<sup>12</sup> Buhle and Wagner, *A Very Dangerous Citizen*, 11.



names,” the ritual that was required of an accused radical to clear his or her reputation and work again, but others did; elsewhere a communist under investigation named Arnold Manoff to the committee.<sup>13</sup> Like countless other writers, Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff all found themselves blacklisted. One way or another, their employers informed them that they were longer needed.

Blacklisted and dropped by his agent, Walter Bernstein began writing television scripts under a pen name, Paul Baumann. But television network and advertising agency executives quickly became aware of this practice among blacklisted writers.<sup>14</sup> They increasingly called for story conferences, in which writers were brought in to discuss their work. Charles Russell, the producer of the CBS television show *Danger*, for which Bernstein was writing, was forced to get creative in order to aid his blacklisted employee. When asked why Baumann could not attend a story conference, Russell replied that he was living a secluded life atop a mountain in Colorado, and had no access to a telephone. In another instance, Russell told CBS that Baumann had gone to Switzerland for treatment of a severe tropical disease. As using pseudonyms quickly became impossible for television writers, the fictional Baumann’s disease proved fatal; he tragically passed away in a Swiss hospital.<sup>15</sup>

Eager to continue sending *Danger* scripts to Russell, Bernstein devised the “front” system, under which he enlisted real people who offered their names to put

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<sup>13</sup> Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 22-23. Bernstein explains that in early television, advertising agencies produced their own shows and sold them to television networks.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 154-157; Bernstein, “Archive of American Television Interview.”

on Bernstein's scripts, for a percentage of the earnings in return.<sup>16</sup> While it afforded him an opportunity to work again, the use of fronts was still dangerous and unreliable. His first front, Paul Monash, would only work on a one-time basis.<sup>17</sup> His second front quit after her analyst told her that it was not healthy.<sup>18</sup> Yet another front, Leo, was unreliable; he was a career gambler and his parents wanted money from him after seeing his name on the television screen.<sup>19</sup> But regardless of their transience or unreliability, Bernstein's fronts were providing a considerable service for a small fee. They were countering the practices of governance that constituted the cold war, and were risking their own careers and reputations.

After Manoff and Polonsky left Los Angeles for New York, having testified and refused to name names, Bernstein introduced them to Russell, and by November of 1951, all three writers were contributing scripts to *Danger* under the names of fronts.<sup>20</sup> About a year later, Russell and Sidney Lumet, a director on *Danger*, were asked by CBS to develop a television version of *You Are There*, which ran as a radio program from 1947 to 1950.<sup>21</sup> According to Bernstein, the three writers saw *You Are There* as an opportunity to "take over a whole show," so that unlike with *Danger*,

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<sup>16</sup> Lee Grant, an actress who had been married to Arnold Manoff, credits Manoff, Polonsky and Bernstein for the creation of the front system. "Arnie was the tactician and the strategist," she suggests. But Polonsky and Bernstein both seem to indicate that the idea originated with Bernstein. Kisseloff, *The Box*, 420; Bernstein, "Archive of American Television Interview"; Polonsky, "Archive of American Television Interview."

<sup>17</sup> Bernstein, "Archive of American Television Interview"; Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 168.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 171.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 186-188.

<sup>20</sup> Abraham Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays: The Critical Edition*, ed. John Schultheiss (Northridge: Center for Telecommunication Studies, California State University, 1997), 315-316.

<sup>21</sup> Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 216-217; Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays*, 11.

they would not have to compete with other, non-blacklisted writers. It also offered them jobs that suited their literary styles; “there was no need to make up stories with unhappy endings,” recalls Bernstein, “history would provide more than enough.”<sup>22</sup>

Russell had no apparent interest in the potential for political content in *You Are There*. Polonsky and Bernstein describe Russell as a non-ideologue, a friend who was more concerned with the civil liberties of the victims of the red scare than with partisan politics. Unlike the three writers, who had grown up in the working class ethnic enclaves of the Lower East Side and the Bronx, Russell had been born to a middle class family in upstate New York. When he and the blacklisted met at restaurants to discuss their scripts, he sat patiently while they argued politics. According to the writers, Russell was only interested in producing quality television shows, and in helping people whom he felt had been unfairly attacked.<sup>23</sup>

But for Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff, *You Are There* offered an opportunity for them to narrate history in a specific way. “In that shameful time of McCarthyite terror, of know-nothing attempts to deform and defile history, to kill any kind of dissent,” Bernstein recalls, “we were able to do shows about civil liberties, civil rights, artistic freedom, [and] the Bill of Rights.”<sup>24</sup> Executive producer and anti-communist William Dozier gave Russell a list of topics that he wanted the

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<sup>22</sup> Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 216-218. *You Are There* did very occasionally use non-blacklisted writers, but Bernstein, Polonsky and Manoff wrote the vast majority of scripts until the show’s overhaul in 1955.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-217; Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays*, 325.

<sup>24</sup> Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 222.

show to address, but Russell and the writers picked only the topics that interested them, and supplemented the list with their own ideas. They agreed that their history had to be accurate, and that they could not write outright propaganda, but that by emphasizing conflict and what Polonsky called the “social contradictions” of history, the show could bring politics to television in a manner that had not been done before. “You don’t have to lie or change the facts of history,” said Polonsky, “but you have to be able to select them properly.” Polonsky, Bernstein, and Manoff sought to interpret history in light of their own times and to employ history as social action. As if to underscore the relation of history to the present in order to make *You Are There* more politically potent, each and every show ended with Walter Cronkite’s sign off, penned by Polonsky: “What sort of day was it? A day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...and you were there.”<sup>25</sup>

### **The Blacklist Politics of *You Are There***

The most recognizable politics of *You Are There* is its anti-McCarthyism. In show after show, the writers of *You Are There* chose to narrate the stories of individuals who, for one reason or another, had become political or cultural pariahs because of their assumedly virtuous beliefs or principles. In shows on Galileo, Socrates, Joan of Arc and John Milton, historical figures showed steely resolve as they faced condemnation and punishment from authority figures.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Polonsky, “Archive of American Television Interview”; Bernstein, “Archive of American Television Interview”; Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 220-222.

<sup>26</sup> My analysis of *You Are There* is limited to the episodes that have survived. Because early television was broadcast live, only the shows that were chosen for kinescoping were able to be

These episodes were rife with allegorical allusions to the red scare of the early fifties, and they provide insight into the feelings of victimization and martyrdom that the blacklistees experienced. One such episode, "The Execution of Joan of Arc," aired on March 1, 1953, one month after the show premiered.<sup>27</sup> As the Earl of Warwick is being interviewed by the off camera newsman, he calls Joan of Arc a "traitor to the church." The newsman counters, "She led your people to victory," to which the Earl replies, "but this girl is nothing but a witch," evoking the anti-communist accusations that came so soon after the eras of the Popular Front and the U.S.-Soviet alliance of World War II. Later in the Polonsky-penned episode, a bishop interrogates Joan of Arc, demanding, "You must declare that you have been treasonous." He asks that she renounce everything heretical that she has said, and he finally adds, "And you must tell who aided and abetted you." Joan, of course, refuses to recant or to "name names," and she is burned at the stake, after which Walter Cronkite's narrative summation of the episode leaves no doubt as to where the writers' sympathies lay. "The fact is that Joan of Arc was right," he concludes, "and those who condemned her were wrong."

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archived. A number of *You Are There* shows are available on DVD through the distributor Woodhaven Entertainment. Several others can be viewed onsite at the Paley Center for Media, which has locations in New York City and Beverly Hills. John Schultheiss's collection of ten of Abraham Polonsky's teleplays includes a few scripts for episodes that do not appear to have survived on visual media; see: Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays*. Also, because the surviving shows do not credit the blacklisted writers for their work, the only available sources available to determine the shows' actual authors are the writings and oral histories of the writers themselves, and the collection of the ten Polonsky teleplays. In the appendix of this collection, John Schultheiss has provided a list of the episodes of which he has been able to verify the authorship, but again, this list is incomplete.

<sup>27</sup> I have ascertained the airdates for the shows from several sources, none of which offer an entirely comprehensive listing: Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays*, 318-321; Howard Prouty, ed., *Variety Television Reviews, 1923-1988* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989); "You Are There: Episode Listings," *CBS Interactive: tv.com*, 2009, [http://www.tv.com/you-are-there/show/5397/episode\\_listings.html](http://www.tv.com/you-are-there/show/5397/episode_listings.html) (accessed 26 March 2009).

“The Crisis of Galileo,” which aired April 19, 1953 and was also written by Polonsky, reveals similar motifs. The episode follows Galileo Galilei’s recantation of his heliocentric model of the universe, in response to a Catholic inquisition. In an interview with one of Galileo’s students, William Harvey, the newsman asks him what the effect of Galileo’s recantation would be. In another allusion to the act of naming names, the student responds, “It will make him look like a fool and a coward.” He continues: “...there can be no progress in the world...without freedom of the mind, freedom of thought and of work.” After Galileo recants to the Holy Office of the Inquisition, he returns to the Tuscan embassy, puts his head on the table, and cries.

Arnold Manoff’s script, “The First Salem Witch Trial,” which aired on March 29, 1953, was perhaps the most notably allegorical to television viewers. Arthur Miller’s play, *The Crucible*, had opened in January, and Miller’s intentions in critiquing the red scare through the story of the Salem witchcraft trials were a matter of public record.<sup>28</sup> So when *You Are There* performed the witchcraft trials, focusing on the trial of Bridget Bishop, the first alleged witch to go before a jury, *Variety* magazine noted that the show “presented a powerful documentary for our times,” and that it “underlined in strikingly dramatic terms the lethal threat of false accusations and mass hysteria.” The review made note of the similarities in source material to Arthur Miller’s play, and celebrated its use of allegory even as it lauded

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<sup>28</sup> J.P. Shanley, “New Miller Play Opening Tonight: ‘The Crucible,’ Tale of Salem Trials, at the Martin Beck – Kennedy Hampden Co-Star,” *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1953, 20; Brooks Atkinson, “‘The Crucible’: Arthur Miller’s Dramatization of the Salem Witch Trial in 1692,” *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1953, X1.

*You Are There* for not “spelling out” the allusion to contemporary events.<sup>29</sup> The episode closes with some wishful thinking; Walter Cronkite at his news desk, pronounced, “As madness took hold, so did a deep shame,” a declaration intended to underscore for the American people the injustice of the anti-communist hysteria.

These episodes are noteworthy for the way in they used historical narratives as allegories for the era of McCarthyism in order to defend the value of civil liberties. They argued for the rights of individuals to think and speak freely. But in other episodes, the writers of *You Are There* attempted to utilize other means by which they could employ the politics of history. Rather than use allegory, they featured African Americans and women in non-normative roles, and attempted to shed light upon historical narratives that challenged cold war strategy and consensus ideology. That said, Bernstein, Manoff, and Polonsky clearly felt limited in the extent to which they could pursue these narratives and otherwise construct more materialist interpretations of history.

In “The Emergence of Jazz,” written by Abraham Polonsky, *You Are There* turns to a depiction of the closing of the Storyville district in New Orleans during the First World War. Aired November 5, 1954, the show centered around the debate over whether jazz was “mongrel music” or “the art of the twentieth century,” and whether or not Storyville was a hive of moral depravity or the birthplace of a modern art form. Gathering these various opinions, CBS’s newsmen interviewed the mayor of New Orleans, and a representative of the Louisiana Federation of Women’s

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<sup>29</sup> “Tele Follow-Up Comment,” *Variety*, April 1, 1953, in Prouty, *Variety Television Reviews*.

Clubs. But the vast majority of screen time was taken up by African American jazz musicians. In a television series that each week was characterized by extremely verbose dialogue spoken rapid fire for twenty five minutes, “The Emergence of Jazz” is striking for the amount of time reserved for the music itself, performed by African American jazz musicians. With Billy Taylor playing pianist Jelly Roll Morton, Zutty Singleton as Louis Mitchell, a drummer that helped bring jazz to France, and famed trumpet player Louis Armstrong, who closes the episode as King Oliver, the episode is one of the show’s liveliest.

When the musicians are not playing, they deliver thoughtful monologues that argue against the notion that jazz is morally deprived or “mongrel music.” Jazz “comes from hearing your mother’s voice when you’re on her knee and hearing there the voice of Africa and the drums and the people crying when they were dragged out of their homes and brought here to be slaves,” Morton explains as he plays trills on the piano, “and it comes from working in the fields and talking up and singing against the hot sun and the pain and not letting on to the master what you were saying...and always the blues, always the slow drag.”<sup>30</sup> Authority, in “The Emergence of Jazz,” is vested in the black musicians of Storyville, not the government officials or military men who are sent to close it down. At a time when very few blacks appeared on television and *Amos ‘n’ Andy* minstrel show stereotypes were the dominant portrayals of African Americans in popular culture, the episode

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<sup>30</sup> Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays*, 252. Although this collection of Polonsky’s scripts are helpful in replicating exact quotations, this episode exemplifies the problems of analyzing *You Are There* using the written word. Reading the teleplay of “The Emergence of Jazz” and viewing a kinescope of the episode are profoundly different experiences.



provided a counter-narrative that told of a rich African American culture and a recent past that was marked by repression by white Americans.<sup>31</sup>

The episode on jazz is an exception that proves the rule to *You Are There's* focus on populist or libertarian Euro-American ideas. For example, the Bernstein penned episode "The Louisiana Purchase" draws heavily upon the debates about Federalists and anti-Federalists that drives historiography of the early Republic. Here, President Thomas Jefferson sends James Monroe to France in response to the threat of "backwoods" Mississippi planters who cannot utilize New Orleans as a trading port because the Spanish have sealed it off. As the episode opens, these planters are eager to go to war against France, the new owners of the Louisiana territory. But a planter who proves his ruggedness by claiming he "can lick any man in Mississippi" and "swallow lightning" nevertheless offers a more level headed approach; he says that Jefferson has proved "to be a real friend to...backwoods people," and suggests that they hold off on fighting. Along with the testimony of the governor of the Mississippi, who suggests that Federalists want war for their own political ends, the "frontier men" of Mississippi decide to call off their march on New Orleans. Jefferson and Monroe succeed in solving the problem peacefully, of course, obtaining the Louisiana territory in the process.

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<sup>31</sup> *Amos 'n' Andy* had in fact been dropped by CBS the year prior because the network could not find a sponsor for a show that featured an all-black cast. James Baughman cites the protests of both sponsors and Southern network affiliates as reasons behind an almost complete absence of African Americans on television in the fifties. George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 48, 63-65; James Baughman, *Same Time, Same Station: Creating American Television, 1948-1961* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 209.

“The Louisiana Purchase” undoubtedly ignores the issues of expansion and colonialism over native peoples that historians today are likely to address. But its celebration of Jeffersonian republicanism and western planters also falls in line with the mythological agrarian past that progressive historians celebrated as an antecedent to the Populist movement. By portraying the backwoods planters of Mississippi as having agency in the events that led to the purchasing of the Louisiana territory, the episode suggests that the “popular forces” had acted as catalysts in pushing the “vested interests” towards national progress. Such a dialectic was popular among Progressive historians like Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Beard. But by the 1950s, historian Richard Hofstadter had exposed these narratives as masking the Anglo-Saxon-centric discourses of “a belief in the rights of property [and] the philosophy of economic individualism” endemic to American populism.<sup>32</sup>

A similar invocation of Jefferson appears in Bernstein’s script “The Vote That Made Jefferson President,” which demonizes the Federalists and celebrates Jefferson’s philosophical embrace of popular democracy and the freedom to believe in controversial ideas. But far from controversial, Jeffersonianism presented an alternative to more urban, cosmopolitan, or immigrant-centered discourses, according to Richard Hofstadter. Its suspicion of concentrated state power appealed to both the anti-communists and left-liberals that had grown concerned with the threat of totalitarianism, but its paeans to individualism, its puritanism, and its

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Knopf, 1948), xxxvi.

ideology of self-reliance in production worked at cross-purposes to the goals of the pre-red scare progressive left. According to Bernstein, Charles Russell had historians at New York University review the scripts of the show, but he did not go to Columbia University, where Richard Hofstadter was tenured.<sup>33</sup> Although Hofstadter was no political radical, one wonders what might have been had Russell gone uptown instead of the opposite direction.

The liberalism of *You Are There* is displayed in such other episodes as “The First Flight of the Wright Brothers,” which aired on January 16, 1955. This show celebrated the famous 1903 event, in which the first successful powered airplane flight was conducted by Orville and Wilbur Wright in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Broadly speaking, the story of the Wright brothers celebrates American ingenuity and progress. But more specifically, the show highlights liberal rational thought as an alternative to conservative thinking. The Wright brothers are asked in the episode how they were able to accomplish successful manned powered flight without “money” or “advantages,” and in response Orville Wright stresses that they were raised in an environment that valued education and fostered intellectual curiosity. Their father, a bishop, appears in a segment in which he chastises those who cling to conservative ideas because of religious belief. And established scientists are also taken to task in the episode, for clinging to theoretical assumptions instead of questioning them and experimenting for themselves. Here, *You Are There* suggests individual rational thought as an antidote to conservative

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<sup>33</sup> Bernstein, “Archive of American Television Interview.”

dogmatism. But it also extends its populist critique. In another scene, a scientist at the Smithsonian offers his opinion that all of the important work in manned flight was being done by experts in France and England. He expresses disbelief that the rugged amateurs at Kitty Hawk might be the first to accomplish flight. The scientist also groans that after his own failed attempt at flight had cost the taxpayers a significant sum, his program was going to be “investigated” by Congress. The autonomous Wright brothers faced no such oversight.

Other episodes of *You Are There*, like those on Galileo, Socrates, and Joan of Arc, focused on history that occurred outside of the United States. In Polonsky’s script, “The Liberation of Paris,” which aired February 20, 1955, the narrative centers not on Allied forces as they move westward towards Germany, but on the French guerrillas who rose up against the occupying Nazis as the Allies waited outside of the French capital. Here again, *You Are There* emphasizes the roles of common, lower-class people, but its international context allows this episode to elide the exceptionalism of the aforementioned Jeffersonian ones. The episode also prominently features women playing active roles in the street fighting, a contrast to the dominant understandings of gender roles in the United States, and the ways in which they were portrayed on television in the mid-fifties. Walter Cronkite’s narration at the beginning and end of the episode also reminds viewers of the role that the Soviet Union played in the defeat of Germany, a topic that had become taboo after the onset of the cold war. *Variety*, which awarded this episode a typically

positive review, lauded the show for reminding “the public how quickly Americans forget” in the postwar era.<sup>34</sup>

But for every episode like “The Liberation of Paris” or “The Emergence of Jazz,” there were other topics that Charles Russell would not allow the writers to address. There is a noticeable lack of shows about the Great Depression or President Franklin Roosevelt, and the Spanish Civil War was undoubtedly off limits. Television writer Paddy Chayevsky submitted a script on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, a landmark event in the American labor movement, but the episode was never made.<sup>35</sup> Such an episode would have undoubtedly addressed issues of civil rights – labor rights, to be specific – instead of the civil liberties concerns of figures like Galileo or John Peter Zenger, the subject of another episode. And for a number of shows, Russell recruited other writers, ones that were not blacklisted, and these shows varied in the extent to which they reflected a left-liberal or critical approach to history.

Despite its limitations, in some ways *You Are There* did represent an alternative to the dominant consensus history of the fifties. Exemplifying the way this history manifested in popular culture is *Cavalcade of America*, a long running radio program that transitioned to a television show in October of 1952. The chemical company DuPont created *Cavalcade of America* in 1935 as a means by which the company could improve its public image through advertising. The

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<sup>34</sup> “Tele Follow-Up Comment.”

<sup>35</sup> Erik Christiansen, *Channeling the Past: Politicizing History in Postwar America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2013), 141.

architects of the show intended for it to be a triumphalist celebration of the American pioneering spirit, and for its heroes to embody the same inventiveness and fortitude as did DuPont's chemists. Accordingly, *Cavalcade of America*, besides featuring frequent stories about the early settlers, the American Revolution and World War II, also devoted whole episodes to men like Elisha Otis, who invented the automatic safety device for elevators. In its six years on television, *Cavalcade of America* would earn seven awards from the Freedoms Foundation, a postwar organization that was founded to honor citizenship and patriotism, a record that serves to underscore the extent to which the show epitomized American exceptionalist history.<sup>36</sup>

Bernstein believes that the anti-McCarthyist nature of *You Are There* was allowed by CBS executives because the show was garnering high ratings. But people at the network were certainly aware of the nature of the show's content. At a bar with Russell one evening, television journalist Edward R. Murrow congratulated him on the high quality of the show, and then asked Russell in a hushed voice, "How do you get away with it?"<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately, they were not able to get away with it. It is unclear as to how long executive producer William Dozier knew about Russell using blacklisted writers on the show, but in 1955 he decided to move the show to Los Angeles and replace the

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<sup>36</sup> The Elisha Otis episode, titled "Going Up," aired on the radio, April 29, 1952. Martin Grams, *The History of the Cavalcade of America* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 1998); Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge, "Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge - America's School for Citizenship Education," <http://www.freedomsfoundation.org/aboutUs.cfm> (accessed April 24, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 222; Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays*, 27.

production staff. Television production was increasingly moving from live broadcasting in New York City to filming in Los Angeles, but Russell, Bernstein, and Polonsky were convinced that Dozier was partially motivated by his desire to rid the show of its subversive elements. The show lasted for another two seasons, but as Dozier adopted a more hands-on role in producing the show, it tended towards more celebratory narratives in history.<sup>38</sup>

The writers of *You Are There* undoubtedly would have liked to have taken the show further with its content. Although in newspaper interviews, memoirs, biographies and oral histories, they express a profound sense of pride in their ability to wage a “guerrilla war” against anti-communism, in reality a myriad of forces worked to guide their writing. The very atmosphere of the cold war and the realities of the blacklist put them on the defense. Frequent visits by FBI agents reminded Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff of their status as suspect in the eyes of their government and kept them on edge.<sup>39</sup> And Russell, whose name, reputation and career were on the line for aiding blacklistees, drew the line at certain treatments and topics, including the very events that were formative for the writers’ political consciences, such as the Spanish Civil War, the case of the Scottsboro Boys, and the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti.

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<sup>38</sup> Polonsky, *You Are There Teleplays*, 290; Bernstein, “Archive of American Television Interview”; Polonsky, “Archive of American Television Interview.”

<sup>39</sup> In 2004, Bernstein recalled that the FBI visited him about once a month. Walter Bernstein, “Between Us and Them, Suspicion Poisons the Air,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 2004, B11; Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 174-176; Polonsky, “Archive of American Television Interview.”

If *You Are There* represented an alternative to the consensus history of scholars like Daniel Boorstin and television programs like *Cavalcade of America*, what then was the alternative that it was offering? It may have drawn upon the Progressive historians' tendency to lionize the backwoods farmers of the revolutionary era and the populist movement, but it elided their materialist emphasis on conflict in the American past. And it did not draw upon Richard Hofstadter's political-intellectual focus on the dangers of property-rights populism. In short, when Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff sought to write their more "political" shows, they mostly adopted civil libertarian rhetoric and failed to incorporate that of social justice.

### **Swashbuckling at the Blacklist**

Just as Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff were being fired from *You Are There*, Hannah Weinstein emerged on the landscape of television production, offering new opportunities for blacklisted writers. Hannah Weinstein (née Dorner) had been a journalist for the New York *Herald Tribune* in the years of the Great Depression, and after assisting Fiorello La Guardia's 1937 campaign, became a speechwriter for the New York mayor. Immediately after World War II, she served as Executive Director of the Committee for the Arts, Sciences and Professions (ASP), an organization that sponsored anti-red scare and pro-civil rights demonstrations and events. (In 1945, the ASP had incorporated Hollywood's largest Popular Front organization, the Hollywood Democratic Committee, to which countless liberal, socialist, and



communist film industry workers belonged.<sup>40</sup>) Weinstein joined the ASP in supporting the 1948 Progressive Party presidential campaign of Henry Wallace, and when the ASP merged with a political action committee to form the Progressive Citizens of America (PCA), she became a vice chairperson, and soon later joined Wallace's platform committee.<sup>41</sup> After Wallace's campaign drowned in the rising tide of anti-communism, she left for Europe, disillusioned with the inhospitable political climate in the United States.<sup>42</sup> Weinstein decided to start her own television studio in England and serve as its producer. She would hire almost exclusively blacklisted writers.<sup>43</sup>

Hannah Weinstein's first television show, *Colonel March of Scotland Yard*, ran on American television in syndication from 1954 to 1956, and it employed Bernstein and Polonsky for a brief period of time.<sup>44</sup> But Weinstein achieved far greater success with *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the first production created under her new studio, Sapphire Films. The popular television show would run original

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<sup>40</sup> See chapter one for more on Hollywood's Popular Front organizations.

<sup>41</sup> Clayton Knowles, "PCA Votes 74-Point Platform Embracing Wallace Policies," *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 1948, 1; "Wallace Party Sets Stage for Philadelphia Convention," *Washington Post*, Jul. 20, 1948, 3. The National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions continued to operate autonomously after 1948, although in an increasingly diminished capacity. "Arts Group Here Votes to Disband: Local Office of Controversial Council Dissolved – Parent Body May Do Likewise," *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1955, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum, Aug. 28, 1956, Hannah Dorner Weinstein File, Federal Bureau of Investigation (hereafter cited as HDW-FBI).

<sup>43</sup> Clayton Knowles, "PCA Votes 74-Point Platform Embracing Wallace Policies," *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 1948, 1; John Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York: Norton, 2000), 433-34; Walter Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 245-46; Chapman, "The Adventures of Robin Hood and the Origins of the Television Swashbuckler," 274.

<sup>44</sup> Bernstein, *Inside Out*, 245-46.

episodes in the United States and Great Britain, from 1955 to 1958, for a total of 143 episodes, and would continue to be shown throughout the early sixties.<sup>45</sup>

Weinstein and her story editor, Arthur Ruben, carefully implemented a system by which blacklisted writers, who remained in the United States, could contribute to the British show. They started by employing Ring Lardner, Jr. and Ian McLellan Hunter. Lardner and Hunter had become close friends after meeting in 1935; both were reporters for the *Daily Mirror* in New York City. Lardner had been called before HUAC in 1947 as one of the “Hollywood Ten,” his testimony featuring the most memorable line of the hearings. When asked to answer the question of whether or not he was a communist, Lardner retorted: “I could answer it, but if I did, I would hate myself in the morning.” Lardner went to prison for contempt of Congress, as did the other nine “unfriendly” witnesses. Hunter, meanwhile, earned an Academy Award for *Roman Holiday* (1953), a screenplay to which another blacklisted writer, Dalton Trumbo, had contributed but did not receive screen credit. Hunter’s guilt over the incident was assuaged when he too became blacklisted soon later.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Chapman, “*The Adventures of Robin Hood* and the Origins of the Television Swashbuckler,” 273; Walter Arnes, “Robin Hood Continues His Fast Galloping Over Hill, Dale, Television,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 6, 1957, G5.

<sup>46</sup> Although Hunter has gone on record saying otherwise, Bernard Dick suggests that the widely understood notion that Hunter consciously worked as Trumbo’s front on *Roman Holiday* is false, and that Hunter was simply one of several people that worked on the script following Trumbo’s original treatment. Peter H. Brown, “Blacklist: The Black Tale of Turmoil in Filmland,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 1, 1981, N3; Bernard Dick, *Radical Innocence: A Critical Study of the Hollywood Ten* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1989), 166-168, 203; “Ian McLellan Hunter, Screenwriter, Was 75,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1991, D25.

Hunter and Lardner worked collectively on just about every script of the first season of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, after which other writers were brought in as well. Over the years, the show employed at least a dozen blacklistees, including Waldo Salt, Janet Green, Maurice Rapf, Robert Lees, Sam Moore, Arnaud D'Usseau, "Hollywood Ten" member Adrian Scott, Fred Rinaldo, Arnold Manoff, and Howard Dimsdale.<sup>47</sup> Lardner and Hunter would continue to work for Weinstein in writing other shows for Sapphire, including *The Buccaneers* (1956-1957) and the less popular *Sword of Freedom* (1958). Just as with *Robin Hood*, on every one of Weinstein's shows they were later joined by a widening, rotating cast of other blacklisted writers including Salt, Manoff, and Michael Wilson, writer of the contentious leftist film, *Salt of the Earth* (1954).<sup>48</sup>

Ruben and Weinstein employed a system whereby each writer was assigned multiple pseudonyms, so that the television executives at CBS or ITV would not become too interested in the work of any single writer. Ring Lardner, Jr. recalls the careful manner in which they went about getting paid; paychecks were made out to pen names that the writers had registered with Social Security, and the writers deposited their pay into savings accounts, but never checking accounts, because to

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<sup>47</sup> Steve Neale, "Swashbucklers and Sitcoms, Cowboys and Crime, Nurses, Just Men and Defenders: Blacklisted Writers and TV in the 1950s and 1960s," *Film Studies* 7 (Winter 2005): 83-84, 89-92.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 89-92; Steve Neale, "Pseudonyms, Sapphire and Salt: 'Un-American' Contributions to Television Costume Adventure Series in the 1950s," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 23, no. 3 (2003) :247.

open one required the depositor to provide identification.<sup>49</sup> Unable to obtain passports from the United States State Department, Lardner and the other writers stayed in New York and mailed their scripts to Weinstein and Ruben in England.<sup>50</sup>

Like Bernstein, Manoff, and Polonsky, the writers of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* understood clandestine television writing as a means to strike back against the ideology of the red scare. “There were many social issues you could deal with,” remembered Lardner, “by going back to the twelfth century and having a bandit as your hero.” He and Hunter “found all sorts of variations,” he says, on approaches to contemporary topics.<sup>51</sup>

A former member of the American Communist Party, Weinstein could have done worse than to select the legend of Robin Hood as a means to challenge the cultural climate of the cold war and allegorize the contemporary geopolitical conflicts of the period.<sup>52</sup> Robin Hood, according to legend well known in both England and the United States (thanks to the 1938 Warner Brothers film starring Errol Flynn), was an outlaw with a keen sense of social justice, who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor. His antagonistic attitude towards the authoritarian Prince John and the Sheriff of Nottingham had the potential to reflect mid-century anti-fascist sentiments. And his empathy towards the poorest of England’s inhabitants

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<sup>49</sup> Ring Lardner, Jr., “Archive of American Television Interview,” *Archive of American Television*, July 1, 1999, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/ring-lardner-jr>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid; “Feared by the Bad, Loved by the Good,” *On the Media*, July 23, 2010, radio broadcast, <http://www.onthemedial.org/2010/jul/23/feared-by-the-bad-loved-by-the-good/transcript/>, accessed Oct. 30, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Lardner, “Archive of American Television Interview.”

<sup>52</sup> Louis Budenz, memorandum, 1950, HDW-FBI; John Marchi, “Hannah Dorner Weinstein” report, Apr. 27, 1951, HDW-FBI; Legal attache to Director FBI, Jan. 31, 1957, HDW-FBI.

could reflect socialist and Popular Front positions on wealth distribution, and the understanding, articulated by Franklin Roosevelt, that all citizens of the world deserved not only basic civil liberties, but also “freedom from want.”

In England, Robin Hood had served as a popular agrarian myth. According to the story, the Saxon people, who were yeoman farmers, had become serfs under the feudalistic rule of the Norman invaders. Although its roots predate the birth of liberalism, the Saxon myth bears a great resemblance to the Jeffersonian utopia that is so often conjured as the wellspring of democracy in a mythical American past. So *The Adventures of Robin Hood* drew from a symbolic language common to populist mythology in both the United States and England. Weinstein’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood* took the time in almost every episode to invoke the language of “Normans” and “Saxons.”

The British recall the feudalism of the period as the “Norman yoke,” but we might instead say that Prince John’s Norman regime put the inhabitants of Weinstein’s England, quite literally, on the “road to serfdom.” At the end of World War II, free market economist F.A. Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* challenged the centrally planned economies of the Soviet Union and the wartime United States by tying such regimes to the threat of a new totalitarian economic feudalism. Adapted for publication in *Reader’s Digest*, *The Road for Serfdom* became immensely popular. Hayek and others, in the years following the war, succeeding in shifting political discourse away from anti-fascism, which saw autocrats as evidence of the failures of capitalism and as obstacles to class consciousness, towards one that understood

autocrats as obstacles to free market productivity.<sup>53</sup> *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was caught in the middle of this shift. In the cultural context of the late fifties, the Normans could stand in for anti-liberal totalitarians, much better than they could represent moneyed trusts or monopolistic corporations.

In several episodes, conflict centers around the lower class members of Nottingham being denied political rights rather than economic rights. They are impressed into a malevolent Norman aristocrat's army in one episode. In another episode, "Children of the Greenwood," a boy and a girl are made into serfs after their father is framed for murder. "No matter how poor we are," the father counsels his son at the start of the episode, "you are a free man." That his family's land is taken away subsequent to his arrest matters less than the loss of autonomy that ensues as a result of Norman tyranny. The television show undoubtedly cultivates sympathy on behalf of its economically unprivileged protagonists. But it finds its solutions in a kind of populism that celebrates a mythic individualistic ideal. Rooted in England's championing of the Saxon yeoman, but also in the powerful Jeffersonian agrarian myth that has guided American political thought since the birth of the republic, this populist rhetoric in the United States traditionally pits producers – exemplified by the small farmer or petit bourgeois – against both concentrated capital and the landless, idle, or unskilled poor. Whereas populism in the 1930s and early 1940s had been imbued with the anti-fascist, social democratic politics of the Popular

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<sup>53</sup> Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 88-90.

Front, in the postwar period, populism in the United States increasingly became a vehicle for a more libertarian kind of politics.<sup>54</sup>

As was the case with *You Are There*, the writers of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* often took the opportunity to speak directly to the injustices of the Hollywood blacklist. In an episode titled “The Vandals,” the sheriff interrogates a village ironsmith in an attempt to make the man confess that he has made arrow tips for Robin Hood.<sup>55</sup> “I know you are a decent citizen now,” the Sheriff goads, evoking the language of HUAC inquisitors that sought to guilt former radicals into naming the names of communists and fellow travelers. The ironsmith reveals Robin Hood as the benefactor of his arrow making skills, and in doing so implicates Robin in a crime. But the ironsmith is ashamed of his actions, and eventually finds Robin in the forest and warns him. In another Lardner and Hunter episode, “Blackmail,” a man stumbles upon Maid Marian and Robin talking in the forest, and threatens to inform the Sheriff of Nottingham of Marian’s fellow-traveler-like association with the outlaw. Robin outwits both the man and the Sheriff, and the confused Sheriff ends up killing the man.<sup>56</sup>

Another episode employs the witchcraft allegorical strategy that had become quite popular by the middle of the fifties. In “The Ordeal,” penned by Lardner and Hunter, the Sheriff of Nottingham hatches a plot to turn villagers against Robin’s

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<sup>54</sup> For more on populism, see Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> According to Steve Neale, this episode was most likely written by Robert Lees. Neale, “Swashbucklers and Sitcoms, Cowboys and Crime, Nurses, Just Men and Defenders,” 89.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

band of merry men by framing one of them for murder.<sup>57</sup> The sheriff sows rumors among the villagers, precipitating a mob mentality that quickly grows out of control. The zealous villagers plant evidence to affirm their suspicions that the outlaw Edgar has committed the crime, and force Edgar to face a trial in which he will have to grasp an iron rod that has been heated in a fire. If Edgar's hand blisters, it is evidence of his guilt. By investigating in the village, Robin and Friar Tuck are able to reveal to the townspeople the inconsistencies and untruths behind their accusations, Edgar is spared from the ordeal, and the true criminal is revealed. The episode seems to at once condemn all manner of collective or institutional political action; it critiques the irrationality of mobs, the show trials of totalitarian states like the Soviet Union, and the dramatic political theatre of McCarthyism.

Shortly after "The Ordeal" aired in the show's first season, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* returned even more directly to the witchcraft theme. In "The Alchemist," a poor village woman is accused of being a witch because she has mysteriously come into possession of a gold plate, which she is trying to sell so that she can afford to pay the Sheriff's onerous taxes. The plate had been smuggled into the village by her son, one of Robin's merry men. Were she to explain this to the villagers, she would endanger him. At night, one villager sees the woman standing in front of a tree, in such a position that it appears as though she is adorned with horns, and rumors begin to spread.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 89.



An accusing villager brings the woman's plate to the sheriff, who quickly determines that the plate is not the product of a witch's alchemy. He recognizes the seal on the plate as one which belongs to a Norman aristocrat whose goods had been recently pillaged by Robin's men. But the sheriff decides to use the people's hysteria as a means to draw Robin into a trap. With the accused woman on trial, he has no doubts that her son will attempt a rescue. The sheriff concocts a plan in which the villager will heighten the town's hysteria by poisoning cattle and spreading rumors. In the end, Robin and his men expose the plan and save the woman before she is burned at the stake. False accusations of witchcraft would re-emerge in at least one more subsequent episode.<sup>58</sup>

Like Bernstein, Polonsky, and Manoff on *You Are There*, Lardner, Hunter, and the other blacklisted writers on *The Adventures of Robin Hood* were attempting to articulate their own legal rights through television. In allegorizing the blacklist, they were extending a strategy of drawing upon civil liberties that Lardner and the other nine members of the "Hollywood Ten" had adopted in October of 1947 when they were subpoenaed to testify before HUAC.<sup>59</sup> Just prior to that, the Hollywood branch of the PCA had invoked civil liberties in a large conference, "Thought Control in the U.S.A.," that they assembled in July of that year.<sup>60</sup> And the fight for civil liberties had been a key component of the labor movement since at least the founding of the

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<sup>58</sup> See "The Friar's Pilgrimage" in the second season, for example.

<sup>59</sup> Edward Dmytryk, *Odd Man Out: A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 53; Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 267-8.

<sup>60</sup> Harold Salemsen, ed., *Thought Control in the U.S.A.* (Los Angeles: Hollywood A.S.P. Council, P.C.A., 1947).

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 1920, which invoked civil liberties as a means to an end of greater social and economic equality.<sup>61</sup> To be clear, the civil libertarianism of the left-liberal blacklistees was not altogether new, and it was not without provenance on the left.

Increasingly, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* focused less on the ways in which townspeople were burdened by the Sheriff's onerous taxes, and more on the posturing and politicking of nobles who were either loyal to the absent King Richard or looking to capitalize on the reign of the usurping Prince John. The heroes of the show were quite often members of the estate holding class. The good nobles tended to be more fair to the men and women who worked their land than their evil Norman counterparts, this the show made apparent, but their own woes were far more central to the show's storylines than were those of their serfs and servants. They were tremendously wealthy in property, but burdened by the Norman tax scheme. They also tended to be more sympathetic to Robin and his band of outlaws, but not because they believed in wealth redistribution, but rather because they knew Robin to be loyal to King Richard, and were loyal to him as well. Upon meeting Robin, these nobles tended to invoke his history of having served alongside Richard in the Crusades instead of his history of being an altruistic outlaw.

Particularly as the show entered its second year, the storylines elaborated on the tensions between the forces of John and those of Richard. Several of these

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<sup>61</sup> "Civil Liberty," American Civil Liberties Union Microfilm, Reel 16, Vol. 120, 11-12, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, <https://webspace.princeton.edu/users/mudd/Digitization/MC001.01/MC001.01%20volume%20120.pdf>, accessed April 9, 2013. Also see chapter one of this dissertation.

episodes feature a character named Sir Richard of the Lea, a sympathetic estate holder who is loyal to King Richard. One Hunter and Lardner episode, "The Deserted Castle," finds the Queen Mother Eleanor hiding in secret, where she helps Robin thwart Prince John's plan to ally with France against those loyal to her son. And in a couple of episodes also penned by Hunter and Lardner, "Richard the Lion-Heart" and "Secret Mission," a mysterious pilgrim named Peregrinus who aids Robin in combatting Prince John's forces. Peregrinus, it turns out, is King Richard in disguise, who for reasons that go unexplained, has returned to England but is reluctant to reveal this to his subjects. In another episode, "The Traitor," some nobles have raised money to pay King Richard's ransom – they do not know that Richard is free and has secretly returned – but one of them is secretly conspiring to intercept the money and bring it to Prince John. The question of the distribution of wealth is seldom about the rich and the poor in these episodes, but is instead about those loyal to King Richard versus those loyal to Prince John.

The writers of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* avoided identity politics to a large degree, although Maid Marian, a prominent character throughout the series and a highlight of the show, was often shown to be adventurous, independent, and just as skilled with a bow and arrow as the outlaws in Robin's band of merry men. There were no Saracens portrayed in the series, even though the Crusades were frequently invoked in dialogue as a righteous campaign in which those friendly to King Richard, including of course Robin, had often took part. Nor were there any

gypsies, Africans, or any other stand-ins for African Americans or the Caribbean immigrants that had made their homes in postwar England.

They did write a couple of episodes that centered around Jewish characters however. In the first season's "The Wanderer," Robin and his men encounter Joseph, a healer, who the audience would have no difficulty identifying as Jewish. He wore a yarmulke and spoke of celebrating Rosh Hashanah. Also, perhaps in a nod toward a certain stereotype or self-ascription about Jews, Joseph is identified as a lover of books. Joseph is on his way to see to a noble, Sir Walter, who has suffered a wound from a duel.

In counsel with Walter, Joseph angers two other healers that are also present, and that are competing for Walter's patronage. Joseph insists that Walter's wound is infected, but the other healers don't buy it, believing the cause of Walter's pain to be Satan's doing. The superstitious healers go to the Sheriff of Nottingham, and complain about Joseph, calling his methods "irregular," and accusing Joseph of treating the families of outlaws. The Sheriff sympathizes to a degree, and refers to Joseph as a "foreign element," but he refuses to arrest Joseph, instead issuing a decree forbidding aid to the families of outlaws.

Next, the episode invokes the familiar allegorical language of the blacklist. One of the outlaws learns that his son is sick and that healers will not treat him. But he also learns that his estranged wife is seeking to name the names of Robin's band – thus betraying the cause of her husband – if it means that her son will get help. Robin enlists Joseph's help in order to solve the matter. But in the process of

healing the boy, Joseph is caught by the Sheriff's men. Luckily, Robin comes to his rescue. When Robin sees Joseph off on the road from Nottingham and thanks him for his help, Joseph shrugs it off, declaring, after all, that *his* people have been outlaws for more than one thousand years.

A year later, in April of 1957, another episode that featured Jewish protagonists aired. Written by a blacklisted writer named Janet Stevenson, "The York Treasure" centered around two Jewish characters, Esther and Joseph.<sup>62</sup> Joseph wears a yarmulke and wears a long, Moses-like beard. They have come to Sherwood forest to find Robin, who appears to be an old acquaintance. They tell Robin about riots in York, pogroms essentially, in which Joseph and Esther's people, refugees from continental Europe, were targeted because a man had started a rumor that they had a wealth of money stashed away.

The Jews of York had indeed a stash of money, which they had collected and saved in order to pay the captain of a ship that would be arriving with more refugees on board. Esther and Joseph were stewards of the money, and were on their way to meet the ship. If they did not get there in time with the money, the ship would turn around. But Joseph was suffering from a sword wound on his leg, and they were being pursued by the man who had started the rumor that led to the riot. As Esther and Joseph seek help from Robin, so does their pursuer seek an alliance with the Sheriff of Nottingham. The pursuer assures the sheriff that he will profit

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<sup>62</sup> Neale, "Swashbucklers and Sitcoms, Cowboys and Crime, Nurses, Just Men and Defenders," 90; Alan Wald, *American Night: The Literary Left in the Era of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 266.

greatly in helping to set up an ambush. In speaking with the sheriff, the man's language is laced with anti-immigrant sentiment.

As usual, the heroes of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* defeat the forces of evil in the end. The racism that lies in the hearts of individual men and women, according to mid-century racial liberalism, is skewered, quite literally, as Robin's sword punctures the anti-immigrant man's torso. Incidentally, the Sheriff resists partaking in the kind of vitriolic language that this man had been spouting. The sheriff even suggests that the immigrants of York are acceptable because they contribute to his lucrative tax base. He only collaborates with the man from York because he is greedy, not because he's a racist. Throughout *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, whether or not the antagonists are killed, captured, or simply admonished seems to have quite a bit to do with their level of perfidy or maliciousness. The man from York is heinously anti-Semitic, and so his character must be killed, a fate which the sheriff avoids so that he might appear again the following week.

That Jews found their way into *The Adventures of Robin Hood* most likely reflects both the blacklisted writers' continued interest in racial and ethnic politics, which had been central to the activism of the Popular Front in the 1940s. But it also reflects the changing status of Jews in British and American society that allowed them to indulge such an interest. If writers like Stevenson understood Jews to be, by their nature, allies in the fight against for racial and economic justice, liberals in the postwar period had tried to downplay such narratives. At the same time, that Jews could assimilate quietly and contribute to society economically was a concept that

was shared among the Sheriff of Nottingham and 1950s Americans and Brits. In the United States, Jewish organizations worked consciously to try to emphasize their anti-communist orientation, and to jettison any aspect of their programs might be seen as un-American.<sup>63</sup> Jewish anti-communist liberal intellectuals wrote of the importance of preserving civil liberties while distancing themselves from social democratic civil rights discourse.<sup>64</sup> And Jewish characters appeared prominently in anti-communist films like *The Red Menace* (1949) and *Big Jim McLain* (1952), not as examples of un-American minorities sowing the seeds of class revolution, but as idealized minorities intent on modeling good liberal conduct. On one hand, the show's pro-immigrant message was plain and clear. On the other, Joseph was only able to claim "outlaw" status in the context of its real absence, his presence divorced of the language of racial solidarity and socio-economic justice that had permeated the literature of an earlier generation of Jews.<sup>65</sup>

### **"Primitive Rebels" and Liberal Governance**

Venerable blacklist historians Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner have celebrated the ability of blacklisted writers to challenge "McCarthyism" by writing for films and television in various clandestine ways. They champion *The Adventures of Robin*

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<sup>63</sup> Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 125-31; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 93.

<sup>64</sup> The issue of civil liberties appeared on occasion in the pages of *Commentary*, for example: Irving Kristol, "'Civil Liberties,' 1952: A Study in Confusion," *Commentary*, March 1952, 228-236; Alan Westin, "Do Silent Witnesses Defend Civil Liberties?" *Commentary*, June 1953, 537; Alan Westin, "Libertarian Precepts and Subversive Realities," *Commentary*, Jan. 1955, 1-9. Also see: Arthur Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), 191-210.

<sup>65</sup> See Alan Wald, *Trinity of Passion: The Literary Left and the Antifascist Crusade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

*Hood* for portraying the Normans as “fascistic invaders” and their aristocratic appeasers as collaborators.<sup>66</sup> Weinstein’s Robin Hood, Buhle and Wagner write, represented a “primitive rebel,” an archetype that they note “resisted the invasion of capitalism while appealing for a return to the social institutions of some earlier, happier age.”<sup>67</sup>

They borrow the term “primitive rebel” from British historian Eric Hobsbawm. But in the context of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, Hobsbawm’s concept of the “primitive rebel” deserves more attention, for Hobsbawm is more critical of the phenomenon than Buhle and Wagner suggest in their passing reference. In *Primitive Rebels*, Hobsbawm notes how the social banditry evoked in the stories of Robin Hood is always placed within a rural setting rather than an urban one, and that the bandit’s presence necessitates a “pre-political” context. In the context of Hobsbawm’s Marxist analysis of history, social bandits are ineffective because they reference a stage before that of proletarianization, and they do little to effect that stage in the stories about them. “Bandit-heroes,” he writes, “are not expected to make a world of equality.” Their form of protest, he contends, is “modest and unrevolutionary.”<sup>68</sup>

The story of Robin Hood is undoubtedly backward looking and “primitive”; the character derives from and conjures a mythical agrarian past that fails to offer solutions to the social questions of the twentieth century. The serfs of Robin Hood’s

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<sup>66</sup> Buhle and Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight*, 86.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>68</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1959), 24.



times had bigger concerns than the alienation of their labor. Lacking basic political rights in a pre-capitalist, pre-liberal society, their fundamental interests were in resisting Norman rule, which English mythology suggests supplanted a more idyllic, egalitarian Saxon society.

But we can also understand that myth itself as functioning as a kind of modern technology of governance, well suited to postwar conceptions and projects of liberalism. In this way, Robin Hood and other roguish rebels aren't simply anachronistic, but they appear as suitable vehicles for libertarian critiques against modern state intrusion. Simultaneously, because they tell stories about a pre-industrial age, they are ill-equipped to critique the extra-state governance of advanced liberal capitalism. Invoking Anglo-Saxon and Jeffersonian mythology, they re-inscribe a discourse of modern subjectivity in which romantic individualism is central. Interestingly, whereas the Marxist Hobsbawm sees Robin's dutiful obedience to the right Saxon king, Richard the Lionheart, as a betrayal of superstructural ideas about the role of the state in capitalism, we might understand it as a means by which libertarian discourses about individual liberty are balanced by those which seek to create law abiding citizens.<sup>69</sup> In other words, even as Hobsbawm critiques them, modern interpretations of the story of Robin Hood subscribe to the same superstructural ideas about the state as does Hobsbawm. The story of Robin Hood isn't simply "pre-political," it's well suited as an expression of certain ideas about markets and governance that are central to neoliberalism.

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<sup>69</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 22.

According to these ideas, civil liberties are prized, but civil rights only interfere with the operation of free markets and individual choice.

The romantic individualism of anglophone mythology, we might note, was decidedly not a staple of Progressive rhetoric during the immediate postwar years in the United States, when Henry Wallace, Hannah Weinstein, and other members of the Popular Front were fighting for a “century of the common man.” Wallace himself had been careful to distinguish between political freedom and economic freedom. Speaking on the former, which he termed “bill-of-rights democracy,” he warned that it would lead to “rugged individualism, exploitation, impractical emphasis on states’ rights, and even to anarchy.” The latter, which he termed the “new democracy,” according to Wallace “abhors imperialism” and seeks “economic, educational, ethnic, and gender democracy.”<sup>70</sup> In effect, Wallace was arguing for the primacy of civil rights over civil liberties. And in contrast to his “new democracy,” Wallace rejected Winston Churchill’s strident anti-communism of the forties, which Wallace dismissed as “Anglo-Saxon Ueberalles.”<sup>71</sup> Just like Richard Hofstadter, Wallace had located a dangerous counter-progressive current in the anglophone tradition from which *The Adventures of Robin Hood* drew. In his criticism of Churchill’s proposed Anglo-American alliance, he echoed sentiments of the CPUSA

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<sup>70</sup> Culver and Hyde, *American Dreamer*, 292.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 301.

and the Popular Front.<sup>72</sup> But these echoes failed to reverberate through *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.

Hunter and Lardner's correspondence with Weinstein suggests that they considered carefully the limits to which they could present radical critiques of capitalism in their work. After crafting their approach to writing *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and drafting the first set of episodes, they expressed frustration at the lack of quality in a handful of scripts that Weinstein and Ruben had assigned to local writers in England. One script in particular, they complained, got the mechanics of feudalism wrong by having Maid Marian send her taxes directly to London rather than to the local ruler. Lardner and Hunter argued that in their own scripts they adhered most strictly to historical authenticity, not only so that the show might have some sort of pedagogical value that could possibly be capitalized upon in marketing campaigns, but that such an approach might also "be an affective [sic] counterstroke to the possible attack on Robin Hood as an egalitarian."<sup>73</sup> By understanding and adhering to the limits of allegory, Lardner and Hunter were consciously dulling their work.

As they worked on the scripts for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the two writers consistently discussed new ideas for projects with Hannah Weinstein.

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<sup>72</sup> See for example: V.J. Jerome, *Culture in a Changing World: A Marxist Approach* (New York: New Century Publishers, 1947), 35-37; John Howard Lawson, *The Hidden Heritage: A Rediscovery of the Ideas and Forces That Link the Thought of Our Time with the Culture of the Past* (New York, Citadel Press, 1950).

<sup>73</sup> Ring Lardner, Jr. and Ian McLellan Hunter to Hannah Weinstein, June 16, 1955, box 4 folder 17, *Ian McLellan Hunter Papers*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles (hereafter cited as IMH-MHL).

Mostly, these discussions avoided politics or ideology, centering upon which projects would be the most profitable and easy to script. In one case, Hunter and Lardner did reject one of Weinstein's ideas as "blatantly reactionary." When Weinstein suggested that the studio develop an Edgar Wallace story, previously adapted as the pro-imperialism feature film *Sanders of the River* (1935) – in which Paul Robeson starred and later professed shame for having participated in the production – the two writers objected strongly, and the project was abandoned.<sup>74</sup>

In contrast, Hunter and Lardner hoped to adapt the William J. Blake novel, *The World is Mine*, for a feature film, and they discussed it with Weinstein, although this project too was ultimately shelved. The story would take place during the Great Depression and the Spanish Civil War, a setting that was quite different than those that Weinstein's company had been pursuing.<sup>75</sup> Although Lardner and Hunter were most enthusiastic about writing the adaptation, Weinstein chose to abandon it, perhaps for the same reason that Lardner and Hunter themselves expressed were behind the decision to stick with more historically distant time periods; they didn't want to get into trouble.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ring Lardner, Jr. and Ian McLellan Hunter to Hannah Weinstein, August 29, 1955, box 4 folder 17, IMH-MHL; Sheila Tully Boyle and Andrew Bunie, *Paul Robeson: The Years of Promise and Achievement* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 324-25.

<sup>75</sup> Ring Lardner, Jr. and Ian McLellan Hunter to Hannah Weinstein, December 20, 1955, box 4 folder 17, IMH-MHL.

<sup>76</sup> Albert Ruben to Ring Lardner Jr. and Ian McLellan Hunter, February 1, 1956, box 4 folder 17, IMH-MHL.

### **The Unfulfilled Promise of *The Buccaneers***

Hannah Weinstein sought to capitalize on the early success of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* by producing several other shows in the “swashbuckling” genre. After recruiting other blacklisted writers, she pulled Lardner and Hunter from *Robin Hood* and put them to work on *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot* (1956-57) and *The Buccaneers* (1967-57). Later, Weinstein produced similar shows under similar methods, *Ivanhoe* (1958-59) and *Sword of Freedom* (1958).<sup>77</sup>

One of the more popular shows, *The Buccaneers*, illustrates the difficulties that blacklistees had in trying to subvert the anti-communist climate of the early cold war. The show’s action centered on the eighteenth century British colonial port of Nassau in the Bahamas, and featured a protagonist named Dan Tempest, a reformed pirate now in the service of the crown as a privateer and hired guardian of the island of New Providence. Tempest, like Robin Hood, is a roguish individual who tends to buck authority, although he ultimately bears allegiance with the orderly forces of good, who in this case, are the British colonial government. His enemies are the Spanish, and pirates like Blackbeard, and to a lesser extent, bureaucrats and colonial governors with which Tempest might bump heads.

The first few episodes of the show, which began airing in September 1956, narrate Tempest’s conversion from pirate to privateer.<sup>78</sup> The governor of the

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<sup>77</sup> See Neale, “Swashbucklers and Sitcoms, Cowboys and Crime, Nurses, Just Men and Defenders.”

<sup>78</sup> For television air dates, see: Neale, “Swashbucklers and Sitcoms, Cowboys and Crime, Nurses, Just Men, and Defenders,”; “The Buccaneers,” *tv.com*, <http://www.tv.com/shows/the-buccaneers-1956> (accessed Jan. 8, 2013).

Bahamas issues amnesty to all pirates that might join the British. The governor himself, formerly a privateer, rejects the classist dismissal of pirates that is prevalent among his peers, understanding them to have been mistreated by an overly imperious British administration. By displaying an even hand, the governor seeks to usher in a period of consensus and cooperation that will serve the colonialist aims of the mother country.

Blackbeard rejects the deal, but Tempest accepts it. Tempest subsequently reckons with the attitudes of the elitist, effete Van Brugh, a planter on New Providence who is wary of rugged, low men like Tempest, and with his former friends who see him as an emasculated shell of his pirate self. His girlfriend Lolita even leaves him. But Tempest soon proves himself to be both a dutiful British subject and a strong, individualistic leader. He aids the British colonial government of New Providence in thwarting the Spanish, repelling pirates, and in occasionally rebalancing the scales of justice when the Governor or his lieutenant enact an unjust policy.

An early show about slavery attempted to tackle the matter of race. In the "Slave Ship," the seventh episode of *The Buccaneers*, three indentured servants who had been working the unsympathetic Van Brugh's land, escape from the island in a rowboat. At sea, they board a British vessel, and assuming the role of pirates, manage to overtake the crew of the ship and send them away in the ship's longboats. The three men assume they are alone on the vessel, until they find that there are slaves from Africa, bound in irons, down in the cargo hold.

One of the former indentured servants is black, and he communicates with the slaves in a shared language. The reluctant pirates agree to free the slaves, provided that they will work on the ship as its crew. One of the pirates has assumed command of the ship, with the others' consent, and he declares that on his ship, "all men are free, and all men are equal." They name the ship "The Liberty," and the slaves break into song in their native tongue.

Meanwhile, the ship's exiled crew lands on New Providence, and informs Tempest and the other figureheads of the island that their ship has been taken by pirates. The slaves, it turns out, were to be delivered to Van Brugh, and he tasks Tempest with getting them back. Tempest sets out for the Liberty, and his men retake the ship, defeating the three rookie pirates in swordplay but ultimately leaving them unharmed.

Tempest questions the assumed leader of the three and is sympathetic to their situation as runaway indentured servants. He takes the money that the leader of the pirates had stolen from the ship's captain, and then lets the three escape in a rowboat, pointing them towards Jamaica, where Tempest tells them they will be safe. He then sets out to deliver the slaves to Van Brugh.

Finally, Tempest reaches New Providence, arriving to applause. Upon greeting Van Brugh, Tempest tells him that he wants to buy the slaves. In a clever act, Tempest uses the money that was stolen from the ship's captain – to whom Tempest had denied that he had recovered his stolen purse – in order to outbid Van Brugh in an impromptu slave auction; Tempest effectively purchases the slaves with

the planter's own money. The slaves, Tempest immediately declares, are free, and he asks Lieutenant Governor Beamish to set them to work as settlers on the island. "The Slave Ship," which television scholar Steve Neale believes to be written by Waldo Salt, succeeds in portraying black characters when few were shown on the small screen, and in its depiction of Africans in bondage in the new world, perhaps a first for the nascent medium.<sup>79</sup> But it falls short of humanizing its black characters, investing them with any authority, or suggesting in any way that the crimes of the past were left to be reckoned with in the present.

After *The Buccaneers* began airing, Hannah Weinstein became concerned about its failure to find an audience. Subsequently, the show's story editor, Peggy Phillips, led a change in the direction of the show, in which Tempest would no longer be bound to working for the governor of New Providence, but instead would become more of a "free-booter," which would enable him and his crew to have more exciting adventures. The show's new alignment, as Phillips expressed it, would also allow the story writers to engage with the history of the colonies that would become the United States. No longer would the Spanish be the primary villains. Instead, Phillips imagined that Tempest could "[aid] the cause of the American people against repressive rule, [and help] the struggling young colonies in their stand for independence and rebellion against the oligarchy."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> In the comprehensive list of blacklisted credits that Neale has assembled for 1950s television, he has placed a question mark next to Waldo Salt for this episode. Neale, "Swashbucklers and Sitcoms, Cowboys and Crime, Nurses, Just Men and Defenders," 95.

<sup>80</sup> Peggy Phillips to Hannah Weinstein, Nov. 23, 1956, box 120 folder 3, Waldo Salt Papers, Charles Young Research Library, University of California Los Angeles (hereafter cited as WS-YRL).



Waldo Salt – Sapphire’s most trusted writer besides Lardner and Hunter – hoped that the new format would allow the writers to explore further the issue of slavery, and he set about researching the plantations of South Carolina.<sup>81</sup> He developed copious notes on a storyline that would paint the slave economy of the colonies as the product of the South Sea Company, a monopolistic corporation. Upon encountering this capitalist monstrosity, Tempest would become a sea-faring version of Robin Hood.<sup>82</sup> In his imaginings, Tempest “preys on fat merchant ships,” and serves on the side of “fishermen, small farmers, bond servants, slaves, [and] artisans.” Salt even created a new backstory for Tempest, in which his “hatred of injustice and slavery” is rooted in his being kidnapped and enslaved himself as a child.<sup>83</sup>

Ultimately, Salt and his colleagues largely failed to incorporate any kind of subversive material into the new version of *The Buccaneers*. They came close with a couple of episodes, however. In the second episode of the new storyline, “Dan Tempest Holds an Auction,” Tempest and his crew arrive in Charleston, South Carolina. Tempest learns from a colonist named Paula, a tenant on a tobacco farm, that the governor of the South Carolina Trading Company is cheating his tenants by buying their crop at untenably low prices, and by forbidding them to sell their goods on the “open market.” Because the tenant farmers work for the company, they can only do business with it, and are forbidden from taking their goods “upriver.”

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<sup>81</sup> See correspondence between Arthur Ruben, Ian McLellan Hunter, and Ring Lardner, Jr., box 4 folder 17, IMH-MHL; Research notes, box 120 folder 3, WS-YRL.

<sup>82</sup> Research notes, box 120 folder 3, WS-YRL.

<sup>83</sup> “Format Change for the Buccaneers,” box 120 folder 3, WS-YRL.

Later in the episode, Tempest calls a meeting of local planters, suggesting that they need to stand up together to the colony's governor. He hatches a plan by which he will bring the planters' tobacco onto his ship and sell it in Boston for a fair price. At the conclusion of the episode, as Tempest is preparing to leave port, the governor suddenly issues a "port tax" that equals half of the value of Tempest's cargo. Tempest contests the tax as illegitimate, and proceeds to clash swords the governor. After the governor concedes defeat and allows Tempest to leave, Paula declares to Tempest, "you've taught us how to stand and fight together."

It is unclear exactly who wrote the episode, penned under the name Alan Moreland. But it clearly seeks to impart a left-liberal message. The governor has turned South Carolina into a company town of sorts, and the planters learn that by taking collective action, they can subvert his power. But by the end of the episode, the show illustrates some of the same populist and producerist tendencies as did *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. The obstacle to social justice is onerous taxation. Furthermore, we might read the farmer's search for "open markets" as less of a critique of industrial capitalism than as one of eighteenth century mercantilism. Another read might also see the show's critiques of price controls as attacks on the kinds of economic planning favored by Franklin Roosevelt and Henry Wallace and condemned by Hayek and his followers. Ultimately, it is the dual nature of the governor as both political and commercial ruler that suggests a libertarian populist read – one that finds suspicion of both concentrated capital and big government – above all else.

Another episode that followed soon afterwards further reveals the limits by which *The Buccaneers* could challenge liberal consensus discourse. In “Mistress Higgin’s Treasure,” Tempest and the crew of his ship, *The Sultana*, are bringing farming supplies to colonists in Virginia. According to a diary entry that he narrates in the beginning of the episode, he is delivering the supplies stealthily because the taxes on the products haven’t been paid. The farmers, he writes in his diary, are starving because of the taxation policies of the crown.<sup>84</sup>

Tempest is quickly sidelined in a plot that involves an entrepreneurial school mistress who is searching for buried treasure. And he ends up having to fight not plantation owners or British tax officials, but pirates who have stolen the farmers’ goods, and who are also seeking the treasure. Curiously, one of the farmers speaks of growing indigo, a staple of the large, slave dependent plantations of the American colonies. The episode, as did *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, takes great care to lionize the independent, yeoman, farmer, but says nothing about the capitalistic structure that in reality implicated indigo production with these plantations on which slaves labored.<sup>85</sup> Even the tenant farmers of the aforementioned episode are gone from the story; wage laborers are replaced by independent landowners.

Other episodes that followed Tempest’s departure from New Providence strengthened the notion that the enemies of industrious, plain Americans were members of an imperious political class that sought to tax the producing classes. In

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<sup>84</sup> Steve Neale suspects that this episode was written by either Millard Lampell or Arnold Perl. Neale, “Swashbucklers and Sitcoms, Cowboys and Crime, Nurses, Just Men and Defenders,” 95.

<sup>85</sup> See Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002); S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

one episode, an indentured servant laments not his economic position, but that the lord of the island on which he works won't let him school his own children. All the man wants is that his owners "stay within the law," he tells Tempest, and he desires to work within the system to earn his freedom. His ultimate goal, he continues, is to own his own land, which he can work, in his words, at "profit or loss." He seeks not economic parity or security, but rather political liberty. And he seeks not structural change, but rather he places in faith in the primacy of the legal contract to which he is bound as a rational individual actor.

The new stretch of episodes lasted for ten episodes, until *The Buccaneers* was cancelled, although not all of the shows featured tyrannical British colonial governors. The crew of the *Sultana* was still encountering malevolent pirates during their time away from port. Some of these latter episodes have the royal governors working with unsavory pirates in order to steal treasure or thwart Tempest's goals, perhaps indicating in a kind of shorthand that the British officials were men of unscrupulous means.

The show's turn away from New Providence and towards the colonies that would become the United States did not result in much of a critique of capitalism, nor did it result in any kind of critique of systemic racism. Instead, it offered audiences a narrative of American history that elided class conflict and celebrated what was understood, on both sides of the pond, as virtuous characteristics of Anglo-Saxon tradition: the contributions of yeoman producers and the importance of liberal governance instead of tyrannical rule. We can only speculate as to

whether or not the project that Waldo Salt and his fellow writers failed to accomplish would have fared any better in the days before the dissolution of the Popular Front. But *The Buccaneers* was clearly shaped by the left's renascent anti-statist lexicon that had emerged in the wake of the red scare and such subsequent events as the Korean War.

### **The Limits of “Resistance” in Blacklist Era Television**

It might be that the producerist rhetoric of Weinstein's shows was entirely lost on the audience. But *The Buccaneers* still contributed to a discourse that worked at cross purposes to the Popular Front era vision of a more inclusive, multicultural, and egalitarian America. Just like the episodes of *You Are There* that addressed the American past, Weinstein's show presented a history of the United States in which the promise of democracy is realized through independent and entrepreneurial white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. As Alan Nadel illustrates in *Television in Black-and-White America*, the show was not alone in reinforcing normative ideas around whiteness. He argues that television westerns in the fifties and sixties, like Disney's *Davy Crockett*, were particularly instrumental in the dissemination of images that linked Americanness, whiteness, and “Anglo-Saxon” libertarian values.<sup>86</sup> The absence of black characters in 1950s television served to normalize America as a white nation, and the contexts in which characters were placed – in the historical west, in moments of national founding, and in the cases of

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<sup>86</sup> Alan Nadel, *Television in Black-and-White America: Race and National Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 80-88, 143, 185.

situational comedies, in nuclear families – served to reify certain constructions of normative Americanness that were coded white.

In contrast, the writings of Popular Front leftists show that left-liberal intellectuals and artists in the thirties and forties were concerned with narrow conceptions of Americanness proliferating popular discourse.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, inspired by Roosevelt's New Deal, the rhetoric of the Popular Front articulated "a new faith in planning and government" which "began to replace the reliance on individual enterprise," according to historian Morris Dickstein.<sup>88</sup> Never uncontested, the public circulation of these Popular Front visions of Americanness waned with the dissolution of organizations like the PCA and the development of the red scare. Weinstein's writers could only reach back to the discourse of the Popular Front era in terms of their faith in a populist brand of politics. But without the social democratic context and the analytical lens of the earlier movement, that which linked race and class, and that which sought civil rights over individual liberties, their messages contributed to a libertarian definition of Americanness that excluded the possibility of structural solutions to economic and racial inequality by championing roguish individualism, entrepreneurial labor, and by writing American history as the story of white people.

Whether or not the writers of *You Are There*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *The Buccaneers*, and Hannah Weinstein's other shows convinced its viewers of the

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<sup>87</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>88</sup> Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), xxi.

evils of political witch hunts is not clear. They may have made the political strategies of “McCarthyism,” in all of its incarnations, unpalatable to Americans, and given them an allegory-rich language of civil libertarianism with which they might voice their disdain. And this is no small thing. As Thomas Doherty suggests in *Cold War, Cool Medium*, the anti-communist programs of men inside and outside of state structures that sought to neutralize the expression of ideas that were contrary to their own interests were, in the long run, stunted by the civil libertarian efforts of television industry workers.<sup>89</sup>

But blacklisted writers in television also contributed to the proliferation of a left-liberal discourse that worked, as the century progressed, at cross purposes with the social democratic and civil rights based spirit of the Popular Front. This has been overlooked by scholars of the blacklist, who have erred in assuming that all liberal or leftist discourses are symbiotic with one another, that such systems of ideas are static, and in assuming that resistance or counter-conduct is defined by its agent rather than its cultural context. Although Bernstein, Manoff, Polonsky, Lardner, Salt, Hunter, and others may have succeeded in undermining McCarthyist hysteria, they were not able to revive the kinds of discussions that were central to the Popular Front, such as those surrounding the Fair Employment Practices Commission, full employment legislation, and other movements for racial and economic justice.

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<sup>89</sup> Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*, 3, 18.

How then do we understand the meaning of “resistance” in the context of twentieth century American liberalism? In the past, we’ve understood it as a means by which political oppression has been challenged. Resistance has historically been the means by which enslaved and marginalized peoples have made progress in achieving steps towards political *and* social equality. It has been constituted in relation to market forces as well as political forces, for example, in sit down strikes and “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” boycott campaigns.

But, as sociologist Nikolas Rose suggests in *Powers of Freedom*, discourses of freedom can operate both as “formula[s] of resistance” and as “formula[s] of power,” in other words, as technologies of liberal governance.<sup>90</sup> Governance, broadly defined, is by no means inherently malevolent, but the traditional notion of resistance, that which is understood to be constituted “from below” and in opposition to a single, focused source of power, Rose argues, is “too simple and flattening,” for it works as “merely the obverse of a one-dimensional notion of power as domination.” To look beyond, he suggests, is to “diagnose the historically shaped limits” of our political imaginations.<sup>91</sup>

In this chapter, I have suggested that the imaginations of left-liberals were guided and circumscribed by their own discourses of resistance. Writers leaned heavily on the kind of Jeffersonianism that lent itself not only to anti-totalitarianism, but also to a kind of individualistic producerism, what historian Richard Hofstadter

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<sup>90</sup> Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 65.

<sup>91</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 277-279.



characterized as property-rights liberalism.<sup>92</sup> In the case of *You Are There* and in the later episodes of *The Buccaneers*, they often did so in explicit historical terms. And in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, they invoked a similar anglophone historical mythology that romanticized a pre-industrial, agrarian past. In the discourse of the left, political liberties went from being a means to social justice to being an end in itself.

Furthermore, we can see the solutions presented in Weinstein's swashbucklers as presaging the communitarianism that would characterize popular articulations of how to resolve the contradictions of capitalism in the post-Fordist era. Robin's band of merry men, Tempest's crew, and the small communities of peasants and farmers that they encounter suggest a means by which micro-politics of community might counteract large, impersonal structures of hierarchy. Rose identifies the contemporary discourse of communitarianism as functioning in a similar manner. While the space that discourses and practices of community carve out appear to be "natural," Rose states that they are "brought into existence" in modern liberal societies to "encourage and harness active practices of self-management."<sup>93</sup> Neoconservative figures in American politics including Newt Gingrich favor community as a means to police and regulate the conduct of

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<sup>92</sup> David Brown, *Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 28, 51.

<sup>93</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 176, 188.

American citizens in a manner that will not abrogate civil liberties or obstruct a free market.<sup>94</sup>

Finally, the case of blacklist-era “resistance” suggests the need to re-examine the function of allegory as rhetoric. Allegory makes for rich literary criticism, but it also permits fanciful historical thinking. During the blacklist era, entertainment industry workers on the left were particularly eager to try to understand their own allegorical acts of resistance as effective, even when they failed to communicate the ideas behind them. And scholars in film studies and cultural history have amplified their sins in bouts of wishful thinking.<sup>95</sup> In turn, this has created a tendency in the work of cultural historians to take allegorical reads as having historical significance.<sup>96</sup>

As the memory of the blacklist has evolved and individual acts of resistance have been afforded heroic status, all manner of allusions and winks of the eye have been trotted out as examples of defiance. In the end, we cannot discount such readings, but in most cases they seem unlikely. There is a great deal of evidence that films like *High Noon* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* were read in all sorts of allegorically contrasting ways, and little evidence that audiences could connect

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 185-6. For more on community, see Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>95</sup> See the latest take on *You Are There*, for example: Erik Christiansen, “History, News, and *You Are There*” in *Channeling the Past: Politicizing History in Postwar America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 100-145. For a more critical take on allegory, see Jeff Smith’s in-depth analysis of allegorical allegations surrounding the film *The Robe* (1953): Jeff Smith, “Are You Now or Have You Ever Been a Christian?: The Strange History of *The Robe* as Political Allegory,” in *“Un-American” Hollywood*, eds. Frank Krutnik, et al. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 19-38.

<sup>96</sup> For example: Buhle and Wagner, *Hide in Plain Sight*.

stories about Galileo and Socrates to the political inquisitions of HUAC and McCarthy. And even if they did, the immediacy of such stories paled in comparison to films that predated the entertainment industry red scare, like *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) which articulated clearly a socialistic, or at least pro-New Deal, stance, or *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947), which as discussed in the first chapter, went so far as to name the names of congressmen who opposed Popular Front policies. Never mind that when writers on the left used allegory, they almost unanimously did so in ways that alluded to political, rather than economic, injustice.

Weinstein's swashbucklers appear to have contributed a lasting template for serial television shows. The model of a knight errant – an itinerant protagonist that would encounter situations in which he would aid people in trouble – caught on in westerns such as *Have Gun, Will Travel* (1957-1963), as well as other shows like *Star Trek* (1966-1969). Such television shows would feature “primitive rebels,” models for post-New Deal liberal ideologies, individualistic socially liberated heroes that would solve problems without the help of large institutions. Weinstein herself continued to be active in both politics and entertainment. She worked in Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign, and produced a large Vietnam War protest rally in Madison Square Garden two years later. Having returned to the United States, Weinstein formed a production company with James Earl Jones, Ossie Davis, and Rita Moreno, called Third World Cinema. The company failed, but she met some

measure of success producing *Greased Lightning* (1977) and *Stir Crazy* (1980), both starring Richard Pryor.<sup>97</sup>

Several of the blacklisted writers that had worked on *You Are There*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, and *The Buccaneers* would attain some measure of success in the sixties and seventies. Arguably the most successful, Waldo Salt received Academy Awards for his scripts for *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and *Coming Home* (1978). Walter Bernstein wrote the scripts for a number of successful films over several decades, from *Fail Safe* (1964) to television's *Miss Evers' Boys* (1997). And Ring Lardner, Jr. was awarded an Academy Award for the screenplay for *MASH* (1970). These films sometimes illustrated an engagement with the politics of the left as they had been reconceived for the 1960s. They tended to emphasize the anti-authoritarianism that characterized the anti-war movement and embraced the ambivalent and cynical stance of the counterculture as opposed to the more idealistic political culture of the New Deal era. Abraham Polonsky's long delayed return to film, *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* (1969), for example, found Willie, a Paiute Indian played by Robert Blake, unable to reckon with the forces of law and racism in the early twentieth century. He flees after accidentally killing his lover's father, and the ensuing manhunt climaxes to a tragic end in which Willie chooses to throw himself in front of the Sheriff's guns rather than surrender. Bernstein's *Molly Maguires* (1970) depicts the Pinkerton Detective Agency in terms that most likely would never made it into film or television in the 1950s – in fact, *Cavalcade of*

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<sup>97</sup> Michael Seiler, "Longtime Backer of Liberals in Politics, Entertainment: Producer Hannah Weinstein Dies at 73," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 11, 1984, C4.

*America* produced a show in 1955 lionizing the strike breaking vigilante organization – but the film’s thick layer of moral ambiguity made it unclear if the eponymous band of rebellious laborers were any better.<sup>98</sup> Lardner’s *MASH* was rollicking, anti-authoritarian and anti-war, but also decidedly chauvinistic. The characters were not just “pre-political,” as Hobsbawm might say, but also ambivalent, un-organized, and individualistic.

As the entertainment industry blacklist faded into memory, it became increasingly easier to talk about the period itself in film, while at the same time, the language of freedom and civil liberties became a lingua franca of popular culture. The next chapter will follow Bernstein and Polonsky, as they struggled in the late twentieth century to shape the memory of the entertainment industry’s red scare in a culture that increasingly welcomed libertarian-left discourse but still eschewed the social democratic politics of the period before the red scare.

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<sup>98</sup> Grams, *The History of the Cavalcade of America*.

## **Chapter Four: Making the Blacklist White: The Hollywood Red Scare in Popular Memory**

Among the hundreds of protesters who had gathered outside the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles during the 71st Annual Academy Awards ceremony on March 21, 1999, one held a sign that was particularly poetic; it pleaded of the Academy, "Don't Whitewash the Blacklist."<sup>1</sup> Over the prior months, a controversy had arisen over the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' decision to give a Lifetime Achievement Award to Elia Kazan, the stage and film director who had named the names of his former friends in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1952. Kazan, whose film work had included *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) and *Pinky* (1949), had found in the early fifties that he was under investigation for his prior associations with radical left wing political groups. Confirming the committee's suspicions of communist infiltration of Hollywood was Kazan's ticket out of being blacklisted from the motion picture industry, even if such an action promised to earn him the enmity of his colleagues.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Goldstein, "Forgive, Protest, or Even Learn?: The Debate over Elia Kazan's Honorary Oscar Put a Needed Spotlight on Politics and Art," *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1999, F1.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Rosenberg, "The 71st Academy Awards," *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1999, 6; Patrick Goldstein, "The 71st Academy Awards: Many Refuse to Clap as Kazan Receives Oscar," *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1999, 1.

In early 1999, a small group of former blacklistees led by Bernard Gordon and Abraham Polonsky initiated a campaign to have those attending the ceremony “sit on [their] hands” rather than stand and applaud when Kazan was called upon to accept his award.<sup>3</sup> Calling Kazan a “rat fink,” Gordon and Polonsky framed the issue over Kazan’s cowardly decision to “name names.”<sup>4</sup> So did others. Noted Hollywood progressive Richard Dreyfus wrote a column in the *Los Angeles Times* to support the protest, arguing that the issue was not one of Kazan’s politics, but his unconscionable act of betrayal. Responding to a column by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who supported Kazan, Dreyfuss notes that “Kazan’s anti-communist career lasted barely as long as it took to testify.” He continues, “...[but] even if you were against Stalin, did you have to participate in these exercises of contempt and hatred and self-loathing?”<sup>5</sup> One of Hollywood’s most outspoken and politically active actors of the nineties avoided dwelling on the politics of the blacklist, choosing instead to emphasize the moral crime of implicating others to save one’s own career. This kind of commentary was ubiquitous. It suggested that the crimes of the blacklist era were not born out of a capitalist rationality, but rather the violation of a presumably liberal code of ethics.

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “Kazan Honor Stirs Protest by Blacklist Survivors,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1999, E1.

<sup>4</sup> Maureen Dowd, “Streetcar Named Betrayal,” *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 1999, A21.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Dreyfuss, “Perspective on Kazan: ‘Sitting on My Hands on This One,’” *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1999, 7.

Certainly, conservative writers were more likely to invoke politics, recalling the crimes of Stalin in order to justify Kazan's act of naming names.<sup>6</sup> But columnist Patrick Goldstein observed that when Kazan went to accept his award, the distinction between those who applauded and those who abstained did not fall along traditional ideological lines.<sup>7</sup> The manner in which the discourse surrounding the Kazan controversy largely steered clear of broader political questions manifested in a demonstration in which audience members held court on one individual's moral choice, rather than doing so on the politics of a recent past that might still inform those of the present.

Writer and former blacklistee Walter Bernstein found the events of Sunday, March 21, 1999 anticlimactic. "The only good thing is that it may have made more people aware that there once was a blacklist," he said.<sup>8</sup> But such an awareness, we might infer, would have little to do with the political context of the blacklist beyond that which centers around the problem of naming names. Those who had organized the protest and those who demonstrated outside of the theater believed earnestly in their cause, but what if the blacklist had already become "whitewashed"? What if their zeal to remember the injustices perpetrated in the name of anti-communism had led them to overlook the way in which the politics of the era have defined the particular way in which it is remembered?

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Hollywood Hypocrisy: If Elia Kazan Had Exposed Nazis, Would He Have Been Condemned?" *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1999, WK19; Richard Schickel, "Cinema: An Oscar for Elia Kazan," *Time*, March 8, 1999, 72.

<sup>7</sup> Goldstein, "Forgive, Protest, or Even Learn?"

<sup>8</sup> Goldstein, "The 71st Academy Awards."



This chapter will address these questions by examining the handful of occasions in the recent past when the blacklist has become more prominent in public memory due to the production of feature films about Hollywood's red scare. In these moments, the blacklist's relationship to the symbols of race and ethnicity, its largely Jewish base of victims and its anti-Semitic tone, and its perpetrators' antagonism towards social democratic thought are overlooked. The Hollywood blacklist is most often remembered as a "shameful" period in which the liberties of individual American were abridged because of the actions of the rogue, demagogic politicians in HUAC. It is not remembered in the context of the breakdown of the second Popular Front coalition, the wartime alliance among liberals and leftists that found a common cause in protesting both fascism abroad and "domestic fascism" at home. And it is not remembered as part of a larger narrative in which cold war culture helped erect a conception of the American character molded out of civil libertarian ideology and "Anglo-Saxon" cultural values. The very fact that the story of the blacklist has been shaped to fit a "consensus" conception of American history is evidence that the blacklist, as part of a broader cold war culture, was effective in constructing or recycling American norms that allowed such forgetting to occur.

Of course, the idea that Americans by nature are "rugged individualists" who value freedom and liberty above social welfare or labor organization existed before the postwar period. And the cold war "consensus" is best understood not as a reality of which our acknowledgement would reify exceptionalist conceptions of the American past, but as a "political project," as historian Wendy Wall has argued,

albeit one that was able to pervade political discourse during the early period of the cold war.<sup>9</sup> Godfrey Hodgson has described the “liberal consensus” as a “grand bargain between liberal values in domestic politics and conservative anticommunism as the guiding principle in foreign policy.”<sup>10</sup> More acutely, Wall describes the consensus as a collaborative undertaking among certain government and corporate interests to “instill” a sense of “shared heritage and values” among Americans in order to combat the rhetoric of extremism and state socialism.<sup>11</sup> I use the term only as a means to describe a powerful ideology that seeks to define Americanness in terms that deny the socio-economic and ethno-racial schisms in the United States. Similarly, as I argue that the values associated with consensus ideology were, and still are, racialized, I employ the language of racial categories such as “Anglo-Saxon” and “white,” which are no more real than was an American consensus. These terms are useful, however, when describing the ways in which groups of people are understood or represented are often contingent on their adoption of (or ambivalence towards) normative American ideals.

By examining the three major Hollywood films to portray the blacklist on the big screen, *The Front* (1976), *Guilty by Suspicion* (1991), and *The Majestic* (2001), as well as the contexts in which the films were produced and viewed by audiences, we can see how American popular memory of the blacklist is subject to a lasting

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<sup>9</sup> Wendy Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 92.

<sup>11</sup> Wall, *Inventing the “American Way,”* 3, 6-7.

discourse of civil libertarianism. In these films, shared dominant understandings of what is just or important are emphasized because of their incontestability in relation to the “American values” that pervade the broader discourse. Thus by leaving out race, ethnicity, and radical politics, the narratives of these films perpetuate the myths of an American consensus; they suggest that most Americans, or at least those whose ideas exemplify normative American thought, can agree on a set of post-racial, civil libertarian principles. The films’ protagonists, portrayed by stars Woody Allen, Robert De Niro, and Jim Carrey, respectively, hold no discernible radical or social democratic beliefs, unlike many of those who were blacklisted. And the intentions of those who led the charges against them are never explained, nor are the politics of the era. From the first of these films to the most recent, as each subsequent film received less direct artistic input from those who were blacklisted, their messages became more centrist and tepid, their casts and characters more white. An analysis of these movies suggests that we must rethink how popular memory is produced in a mass culture society, and it indicates that the ability of the blacklist to silence civil rights discourse – as something that is distinct from that of civil liberties – has had more of a lasting impact on the entertainment industry than has been allowed by historians of popular culture.

### **The Front (1976)**

By the nation’s bicentennial in 1976, a myriad of forces challenged the notion that all Americans might be united by common cultural values and socioeconomic experiences. The rights revolutions of women, African Americans, American

Indians, and Chicanos, among others, brought attention to the many divisions among the American people and the discrepancies in how they were treated in society and by the law. And the disastrous American war in Vietnam suggested that postwar American foreign policy was at best presumptuous and misdirected, and at worst imperialistic.<sup>12</sup>

Hollywood artists, among those in other industries, had been attacking the idealism and naïveté of dominant postwar ideology for almost a decade by 1976. Influenced by the *nouvelle vague* of European cinema, filmmakers crafted narratives of disillusionment and alienation, in which characters expressed ambivalent or hostile attitudes towards liberal American institutions. In this milieu, Martin Ritt and Walter Bernstein, director and writer, respectively, sought to make a film about the blacklist in the entertainment industry.

Ritt and Bernstein had both been working in television when they were blacklisted in the early 1950s. They each had their names published in *Red Channels*, the manual published by the American Business Consultants that informed the entertainment industry in New York who was ineligible for hire.<sup>13</sup> But Bernstein had been able to continue working with the help of “fronts”: people who lent their names to the scripts of blacklistees. Work was still difficult to find, however, and Bernstein’s fronts were often unreliable and required a percentage of his pay. At one point, one of his fronts abruptly quit, telling Bernstein that his

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<sup>12</sup> See Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> Walter Bernstein, “Archive of American Television Interview,” *Archive of American Television*, July 21, 2004, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/walter-bernstein>.

psychoanalyst, of all people, had advised against their professional relationship. Subverting (and capitalizing upon) the blacklist was apparently bad for one's mental health.<sup>14</sup>

Two decades later, Bernstein and Ritt hoped to mine the tragicomic aspects of their experiences in the fifties for a film that would condemn the anti-communist hysteria in the entertainment industry, and appeal to a mass audience at the same time. They cast popular comedian Woody Allen as the title character, and veteran comic actor Zero Mostel in a supporting role that mirrored his own experiences as a blacklisted entertainer. The resulting film, *The Front*, garnered mixed reviews upon its release in the fall of 1976. Audiences apparently didn't quite know whether this "Woody Allen film" was meant to be serious or comedic. But it did create a great deal of press, and coinciding with the death in September of the most prolific member of the Hollywood Ten, Dalton Trumbo, the release of the Academy Award nominated documentary *Hollywood on Trial* in November, and the publication of Bruce Cook's biography of Trumbo the following year, *The Front* renewed interest in the blacklist.<sup>15</sup> It did so, however, by downplaying the radical politics of the blacklist's victims, and *The Front* therefore masked the stakes of the very contest from which its drama was drawn. Even as it emphasized the Jewishness of the blacklist, the film failed to communicate how the blacklist was a contest over the meaning of who or what was an "American" and who was not, and how such meanings might work to constitute the political culture of the United States.

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Bernstein, *Inside Out: A Memoir of the Blacklist* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1996), 171.

<sup>15</sup> Hilton Kramer, "The Blacklist and the Cold War," *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1976, 63.

*The Front* is about a gambler named Howard Prince, played by Allen, who agrees to lend his name to scripts for his blacklisted friend in order to pay his gambling debts. Prince has little social conscience to speak of, and the film follows his character's progression from a selfish naïf to a man of principle who stands up against a fictionalized version of HUAC. Mostel's character, Hecky Brown, also has little interest in the politics of the postwar era. He attended one Communist Party meeting, he tells the Freedom Information Service, a thinly veiled stand-in for American Business Consultants, and it was only to impress a girl he had been wooing. None of the main characters of the film have any tendency towards social issues other than that of freedom of speech. Some of the figures for whom Allen's character begins "fronting" do profess their radical politics, however.

Bernstein and Ritt were careful to make their main characters Jewish. They had originally considered Jackie Gleason for the role of Brown, who was at that time the script's most important character, but instead chose Mostel, a veteran of Yiddish theater and known for his performance in *Fiddler on the Roof* on Broadway.<sup>16</sup> And in one of the movie's most powerful scenes, Mostel's character explicitly reckons with his Jewish identity: he laments that he has suppressed his real name, Hershel Brownstein, for his stage name, Hecky Brown. This scene recalls HUAC Congressman John Rankin's famous anti-Semitic tirade in front of the Congress. Seeking a vote to send the Hollywood Ten to prison for contempt, Rankin called out Hollywood Jews for obscuring their "real" names, and suggested that those who

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<sup>16</sup> Julian Fox, *Woody: Movies from Manhattan* (London: BT Batsford Ltd., 1996), 84.

opposed HUAC were attacking the committee “for doing its duty in trying to protect this country and save the American people from the horrible fate the Communists have meted out to the unfortunate Christian people of Europe.”<sup>17</sup> In another scene, drawn from Zero Mostel’s own experiences, Brown visits a “Borscht Belt” Jewish nightclub in the Catskills, only to find that his blacklisted status has greatly diminished the price he is able to command for his comedy routine.

The Jewish dimension of the entertainment industry blacklist, and of American socialist movements more generally, has been all but forgotten in American culture. Liberal Jewish organizations turned away from progressive politics after the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, when the push factors of anti-communism combined with the pull of the opening of the middle-class to Jews.<sup>18</sup> Their subsequent pursuit of entry into the cult of the American consensus has made it difficult for Americans to remember the ways in which Jews, as cultural outsiders, had contributed to radical and progressive movements in the first half of the twentieth century. The success of postwar American Jews has come at a cost to American Jewish collective memory, in which consensus liberal values have come to define the arc of postwar Jewish history.<sup>19</sup> This cost pits a growing homogenized body politic against those who stand outside normative middle class ideas of

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<sup>17</sup> Victor S. Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 369.

<sup>18</sup> Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 38-41.

<sup>19</sup> See: Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Americanness. *The Front* would be the last major film about the blacklist to present its victims as Jews. But it would not be the last motion picture to focus on the liberal victims of the blacklist. As we shall see, the trope of the naïve and well-meaning liberal screenwriter will continue to dominate popular representations of the blacklist.

### **Blacklist Memory and 1970s Libertarianism**

“Issues like ‘naming names’ are not merely the preoccupation of the blacklist alumni but have suddenly emerged at the center of an avalanche of revisiting,” wrote journalist Victor Navasky in 1973.<sup>20</sup> *The Front* was just one site in an array of lieux de memoire that spanned the seventies. As one might imagine, the politics of the period, those that centered around the nexus of Vietnam and Watergate, had considerable influence on the ways in which the the blacklist was discussed. Navasky listed a litany of publications or theatrical performances about HUAC or the blacklist, including Eric Bentley’s play, *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?*, and Robert Vaughn’s history of the blacklist, *Only Victims*, which Vaughn had adapted from his dissertation. Vaughn’s work undoubtedly received attention due to the fact that in addition to being a scholar he was a famous actor, having co-starred in the television show *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964-8), and in *Bullitt* (1968) alongside Steve McQueen.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Victor Navasky, “The Hollywood 10 Recalled: To Name or Not to Name,” *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1973, SM34.

<sup>21</sup> Ira Peck, “That Man from U.N.C.L.E. Gets His Ph.D.,” *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1972, D17.



The Nixon-Watergate scandal broke open during the same spring that Navasky was writing. The Nixon administration had just ended the unpopular war in Vietnam only two months prior, and the FBI was suffering from public relations problems as well, its counter-subversive COINTELPRO program having been exposed in 1971. For Navasky, Vaughn, and other commentators of the period, to frame the blacklist as a usurpation of democratic authority by an overzealous government was a natural inclination to have.

George McGovern's foreword to Vaughn's work highlighted the connection between 1970's mistrust of government and the history of the blacklist. McGovern touted Vaughn's emphasis on the "shameful" actions of HUAC, and their "totalitarian strategies." McGovern placed the blame squarely on HUAC for "stimulat[ing] the destruction of numerous careers" and "crush[ing] individual expression and creativity to a much greater extent...than any collection of private extremists could possibly accomplish."<sup>22</sup> McGovern then charged the Nixon administration with "discourag[ing] participation in protests" of the Vietnam War and chides it for having collected "dossiers on millions of citizens."<sup>23</sup> Vaughn himself made clear that there was no attempt in his work to study the effects of citizen groups like American Business Consultants; his sole arena of focus was that of HUAC.<sup>24</sup> Nor did Vaughn

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<sup>22</sup> George McGovern, "Foreword," in Robert Vaughn, *Only Victims: A Study of Show Business Blacklisting* (New York: Putnam, 1972), 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Vaughn, *Only Victims: A Study of Show Business Blacklisting* (New York: Putnam, 1972), 17.

seem interested in validating either the politics of liberals or radicals on the left or the tactics of extremists and ideologues on the right.

By 1976, Saigon had fallen to the North Vietnamese Army, Nixon had left office in disgrace, and the U.S. Senate's Church Committee had begun publishing its findings on crimes that had been perpetrated by the FBI and the CIA. Furthermore, at this moment a new libertarian intellectual movement was being born, incarnated most visibly with the creation of the think tank, the Cato Institute. This novel brand of libertarianism had roots in the thoughts of economist Friedrich Hayek, political philosopher Robert Nozick, and novelist Ayn Rand. But it was also influenced by the counter-establishment, and the anti-war politics of the New Left.<sup>25</sup> In its anti-welfare stance, it was contrary to leftists, but in its anti-statism, it was hostile to neoconservatives.

That spring, playwright Lillian Hellman had released her autobiographical account of the blacklist era, *Scoundrel Time*. Hellman's testimony in front of HUAC was central to her story, in which she raged against such left-liberals as Clifford Odets, who had decided to inform on others. The *New York Times* made note of the book's personal, rather than political or ideological focus, describing it as a "series of anecdotes and ruminations leading up to and away from an account of her testimony," in which Hellman famously told the committee in 1952, "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions."<sup>26</sup> Hellman's targets of

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<sup>25</sup> Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 187-9.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Books of the The Times: Going One's Own Way," *New York Times*, Apr. 15, 1976, 31.

opprobrium in *Scoundrel Time* were not conservative anti-communists with whom she disagreed on political issues, but rather the liberal intellectuals that she believed had allowed an environment of fear, one hostile to free speech, to spread. Multiple book reviews contrasted Hellman's personal, apolitical approach with that of Gary Wills, who provided the book's foreword.<sup>27</sup> Hellman's work played down the political and ideological forces at the root of the Hollywood blacklist, helping to lay the foundation for blacklist discourse centered around the condemnation of the "stoolpigeon."

Simultaneous to *The Front's* release, the feature documentary *Hollywood on Trial* articulated what would become a familiar narrative about the blacklist among scholars, but would be obscured by popular history. The film, narrated by John Huston, was effective in grounding the story of the blacklist in the labor politics of the 30s and 40s, and it defended those who had joined the Communist Party in the thirties by providing background on the Spanish Civil War. (However, it elided discussion of the cause of racial justice that many cited as their reason for joining the Party.<sup>28</sup>) Like Vaughn's work, *Hollywood on Trial's* focus was primarily on HUAC, and for the most part, it centered around the story of the original Hollywood Ten, although it addressed the HUAC hearings of the 1950s as well. In particular, it dwelled on the testimony of Larry Parks, the first witness to name names in order to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; Wayne Warga, "West View: From Hollywood to HUAC with Hellman," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1976, O3. Also see: Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Difficult Woman: The Challenging Life and Times of Lillian Hellman* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> See Patrick McGilligan and Paul Buhle, *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

clear his own. The film culminated in interviews with blacklistees like Zero Mostel and John Howard Lawson, who argue that the red scare had ushered in a period of “government by stool pigeon,” re-articulating Hellman’s primary theme. Still, the revisiting and revising of blacklist history was met with vociferous debate in fora like the *New York Times*, where intellectuals Eric Foner, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Alfred Kazin, and Ronald Radosh, as well as others including the producers of *Hollywood on Trial* and Michael Meeropol, the son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, contributed letters.<sup>29</sup> The film was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature and aired on broadcast television in 1977.<sup>30</sup>

All of the aforementioned works were surpassed in popularity by *Naming Names*, Victor Navasky’s National Book Award winning 1980 study of the blacklist. As the name of the book suggests, it focused on the moral dilemma that those who were called in from the House Committee on Un-American Activities faced. Navasky is unequivocal in his stance; he sees the acquiescence of people like Larry Parks and Elia Kazan to the Committee’s witch hunt as morally indefensible. And yet he strikes something of a balance in his book, which he deems “less a history than a moral detective story,” in his attempt to understand the rationale behind informing, and in his elucidation of the “degradation” involved in the process.<sup>31</sup> Navasky closes the book with an ominous warning, suggesting that the acts of moral bankruptcy behind

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<sup>29</sup> Kramer, “The Blacklist and the Cold War”; “Letters: Comments on ‘The Blacklist,’” *The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1976; “Mailbag: Blacklisting – The Debate Continues,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 7, 1976, D24;

<sup>30</sup> “Today’s Best Bets,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 2, 1977, I32; “Television This Week: Of Special Interest,” *New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1977, 135.

<sup>31</sup> Navasky, *Naming Names*, xv, 314.

the blacklist were the result of “what happens when the citizen delegates his conscience to the state.”<sup>32</sup> Navasky was not the first to frame the politics of the blacklist in terms of individual morality, but his book did much to cement the framework as a template for future popular representations of the blacklist. A critic of Ronald Reagan, who was elected President just as *Naming Names* was appearing on shelves, Navasky’s suggestion in his book that individuals are good, rational actors until they are corrupted by an imperious and duplicitous state, an apparatus that in his words precluded rather than facilitated “the possibility of true community,” was something on which the two men appeared to agree.<sup>33</sup> He was channeling the aforementioned libertarian movement’s nascent influence even if consciously he had little admiration for it.

William F. Buckley, Jr., arguably one of the most important intellectual voices behind postwar conservatism and the Reagan Revolution, published two vitriolic attacks of Hellman’s *Scoundrel Time* in 1977, in which he compared her unfavorably to a Nazi war criminal.<sup>34</sup> But after Navasky’s *Naming Names* was published a few years later, even Buckley found common ground with the trajectory of the memory of the blacklist. Although other writers at his magazine, *National Review*, were less generous, and he excoriated Navasky for his “fundamentalist” leftist politics,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 427.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 427. Navasky’s perspective evolved after Reagan’s inauguration, arguing that government should “protect and speak for the common good,” instead of acting as a “referee of competing private interests” as Reagan envisioned. Leslie Bennetts, “Liberals Seek New Answers in Reagan Era,” *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1981.

<sup>34</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr., “Who is the Ugliest of Them All?” *National Review*, Jan. 21, 1977, 105; William F. Buckley, Jr., “Down With Hellman!” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 10, 1977, G6.

Buckley admitted that he had little to quarrel with in Navasky's approach to the red scare and his focus on the "ritualistic" excess of HUAC.<sup>35</sup> As members of the neoconservative right generally decried the rise of historical revisionism to come out of the seventies, but allied cautiously with the new libertarianism, Hollywood would continually move towards this focus in its future blacklist memory projects.<sup>36</sup>

### **Guilty by Suspicion (1991)**

After the release of *The Front*, it would be fifteen years before another feature film about the blacklist would be produced. The re-escalation of the discourse of the cold war after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and Ronald Reagan was elected president induced a marked trend towards nationalistic filmmaking in Hollywood.<sup>37</sup> It would not be until after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe that a Hollywood studio would greenlight *Guilty by Suspicion*, which reached theaters in 1991 and starred the popular actor Robert De Niro.

Writer and director Abraham Polonsky, who had been blacklisted in 1950, had been attempting to make a movie about the blacklist for some time. Polonsky had become good friends with Walter Bernstein while they both worked clandestinely on the television shows *Danger* and *You Are There* in the early fifties,

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<sup>35</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr., "On the Right: TV Has Right Not to Show," *Bowling Green, KY Daily News*, May 4, 1982, 4-A; William F. Buckley, Jr., "A Nonthink by Bookmen," *National Review*, May 28, 1982, 653; Kenneth Lynn, "Acting in Character," *National Review*, Mar. 6, 1981, 230-1; "Just Us Witches," *National Review*, Nov. 11, 1980, 1372-3.

<sup>36</sup> "Revisionism Branches Out," *National Review*, Oct. 29, 1976, 1167-8; Kramer, "The Blacklist and the Cold War"; For more on arguments about revisionism, see: Daniel Rodgers, "Wrinkles in Time" in *Age of Fracture*, 221-255; Gary Nash, et al., *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Random House, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> See: Tony Shaw, "The Empire Strikes Back," in *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 267-300.

but he believed that *The Front's* attempt at social criticism was hampered by its comic approach.<sup>38</sup> Polonsky wrote a semi-autobiographical script about a Hollywood screenwriter who had previously belonged to the American Communist Party just as he had, and after being blacklisted for refusing to recant and name the names of other Hollywood Communists, goes to Europe to make films in exile.<sup>39</sup> He thought he had found a partner in film director Irwin Winkler, who agreed to make the film, which Polonsky had originally titled *Season of Fear*.<sup>40</sup>

Winkler would later make major changes to the script, altering the title to *Guilty by Suspicion*, changing the story to make it more palatable to a wider swath of viewers, and angering Polonsky in the process. "There is no political basis to [Winkler's script], which is what I intended," reported Polonsky, who had insisted that the main character be a communist.<sup>41</sup> Instead, Winkler relegated the script's Hollywood radical to a minor character played by Martin Scorsese. This character flees to England, leaving the naïve Hollywood liberals to sort out their allegiances to one another. Much of the film dwells on the internal conflicts among the targets of the red scare, as good friends turn on one another for want of naming each other's names. The politics of the red scare are thus chiefly represented as the choice of morality versus self-interest within this small cadre of accused liberals.

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<sup>38</sup> Abraham Polonsky, "Archive of American Television Interview," *Archive of American Television*, July 6, 1999, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/abraham-polonsky>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Aljean Harmetz, "Films About Blacklist: Hollywood's Bad Old Days," *New York Times*, Oct. 19, 1987, C18; Victor Navasky, "Has 'Guilty by Suspicion' Missed the Point?" *New York Times*, 31 March 1991, H9.

<sup>41</sup> "Outtakes: Red All Over," *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 10, 1989, X2.

The vague ethnicity of Robert De Niro's character, David Merrill – he may be Italian or Jewish, but it is unclear – mirrors that of the rest of the homogenous cast of characters. There are no accents to represent the many Eastern European immigrants or German exiles that came to Hollywood, nor are there any African Americans to speak of. But when the Hollywood Ten testified in front of HUAC, they were explicit about their understandings of the racial and ethnic currents in the red scare. In the statements of Hollywood Ten members John Howard Lawson and Samuel Ornitz, they stressed the racist and anti-Semitic nature of HUAC's investigation.<sup>42</sup> And other blacklistees remember the period as one of a new nativism, in which oppositional forces were determined to define proper American character in terms that excluded African Americans and Jews. Blacklistee Paul Jarrico expressed pride in the Communist Party's commitment to civil rights in recent interviews, and Walter Bernstein similarly recalls HUAC as being composed of "racists and anti-Semites."<sup>43</sup> Abraham Polonsky's own Jewishness was central in most of his works, including *A Season of Fear*, his semi-autobiographical 1956 novel of the blacklist, his last directorial effort, *Romance of a Horsethief* (1971), and *Zenia's Way*, Polonsky's second and final novel.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Eric Bentley, ed., *Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts from Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1968* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 164; Edward Dmytryk, *Odd Man Out: A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 66.

<sup>43</sup> McGilligan and Buhle, *Tender Comrades*, 48, 333.

<sup>44</sup> Terry Curtis Fox, "Faith on the Left," *The Village Voice*, Oct. 8, 1980. Also see Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *A Very Dangerous Citizen: Abraham Lincoln Polonsky and the Hollywood Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).



Certainly, those who were blacklisted have played a role in the construction of the memory of the blacklist. The invocation of Constitutional amendments, particularly the first and the fifth, was not a foregone conclusion, but rather a strategy that the Communist Party's lawyers devised for the Hollywood Ten.<sup>45</sup> This is not to say that the blacklisted were not themselves believers in the Constitution. They fashioned themselves "Jeffersonians," and even the Constitution of the American Communist Party in its Earl Browder era privileged the "traditions of Jefferson, Paine, Jackson, and Lincoln," and stated that a communist United States would only be a "necessary and logical [conclusion]" to the founding democratic principles of the United States.<sup>46</sup> In public statement after public statement, the blacklisted reiterated their right to free speech, freedom of assembly, and the freedom to keep their political allegiances to themselves.

But they also stressed the anti-progressive nature of the inquisition. For example, in Gordon Kahn's *Hollywood on Trial*, a book-length condemnation of the blacklist published in 1948, Kahn defends the motion pictures produced by those accused as "the most patriotic" of all films. In the same section, he picks out *Grapes of Wrath* and *Gentleman's Agreement* specifically as films with "force and meaning – the kind in which writers, actors, and directors can take pride," and suggests that

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<sup>45</sup> Dmytryk, *Odd Man Out*, 52-54; Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980), 264-271.

<sup>46</sup> Dmytryk, *Odd Man Out*, 8. Also see unpaginated photograph section.

they are the casualties of HUAC's inquisition.<sup>47</sup> It is no coincidence that these two films present socialist and anti-anti-Semitic messages, respectively.

Kahn had reprinted the statements that the Hollywood Ten were refused the opportunity to deliver in front of HUAC in 1947. As previously discussed, these statements were rife with the language of domestic antifascism. Samuel Ornitz attacked John Rankin and called civil rights "a mockery in America."<sup>48</sup> Adrian Scott connected race and ethnicity to housing issues.<sup>49</sup> And John Howard Lawson did as well, adding the causes of labor and peace with the Soviet Union as well.<sup>50</sup> The language of the Hollywood Ten continues in the Popular Front tradition of drawing upon populist rhetoric, but it rejects the tenets of libertarian individualism and consensus ideology in favor of social democratic values. Nevertheless, the protagonists of popular blacklist movies do not call for social welfare programs or the amelioration of poverty conditions. They do not reference the Spanish Civil War or the Scottsboro Boys, or even the New Deal. And they do not speak in terms of class, race, or ethnicity.

It was most likely Winkler's decision to strip radical, racial or ethnic issues from *Guilty by Suspicion*. He wanted chiefly to make an apolitical movie, one "about a moral man who got too caught up in his career," he explains.<sup>51</sup> One sees the way in which he does this in the film's scenes where Merrill neglects his son and his ex-

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<sup>47</sup> Gordon Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial: The Story of the 10 Who Were Indicted* (New York: Boni & Gaer, 1948), 2-3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 98-99.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 106-107.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>51</sup> Navasky, "Has 'Guilty by Suspicion' Missed the Point?"

wife, played by Annette Bening, who often complains about Merrill's tendency to ignore his family because of his commitment to filmmaking. As Merrill begins to confront the blacklist, he also confronts his own failure as a father and husband. Early in the film, Merrill promises to attend his son's school play only to show up late, while by the end of the story, he realizes the need to put his family first. But his ability to do so is facilitated by his inability to get a job. Thus the blacklist serves chiefly as a catalyst for his moral development. Merrill's career is destroyed, but he finds salvation by rediscovering the importance of family and then by standing up for his principles. Polonsky's response to these changes was glib: "When husbands work too hard, the wives don't leave them, they get lovers," he told Navasky. "They leave their husbands if they don't work too hard."<sup>52</sup> Polonsky's materialist perspective contrasts strikingly with the idealist tone of *Guilty by Suspicion*.

The centrality of domesticity was evidently so important to Winkler that he significantly altered the character of Ruth, Merrill's ex-wife. Polonsky had written Ruth as a microbiologist whose own career confronted her with having to take an anti-communist loyalty oath, but the final movie shed her of her profession and her degree.<sup>53</sup> *Guilty by Suspicion* endorsed not only the conservative gender roles that pushed women into the home in the postwar era, but also apparently stood behind the "family values" agenda of President George H.W. Bush's administration of the late 1980s and early 90s. The film only hints at the possibility that Ruth, written by Winkler as a substitute school teacher although she is never seen at school, might

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

have to take a loyalty oath in the ramblings of a HUAC congressman in the final scene.

*Guilty by Suspicion* suggests that the political conflicts in the United States are limited to the moderate postwar ideologies of the right and the left, thus reifying the myth of an American liberal consensus. In one rather melodramatic scene, Merrill finds one of his friends burning a pile of books in his backyard. He is afraid that his subversive library will be discovered by the FBI, but the books he burns are no more radical than J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, a detail not intended by Polonsky when he wrote his earlier drafts of the screenplay.<sup>54</sup> If not in the fifties, then certainly in the nineties, one would have a difficult time arguing that Mark Twain and J.D. Salinger are "un-American."

That *Catcher in the Rye* was chosen as an icon of all that which is precious in American liberal culture is illustrative of the lasting impact of the postwar turn towards individualism in popular culture. Salinger's book, and others that would follow including Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*, promoted a new liberal archetype in the red scare fifties, a safer alternative to the heroes of Clifford Odets's plays, John Steinbeck's novels, and the films that starred John Garfield. As historian Grace Elizabeth Hale explains, the "rebel" of these postwar literary works "offered a model of hyper-individuality without requiring any explicit reference to politics."<sup>55</sup> To the anti-communist intellectuals and literary

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale, *A Nation of Outsiders: How the White Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40.

critics of the fifties, Holden Caulfield's rebellious and individualistic tendencies weren't dangerous at all, and nor were they apolitical. They modeled the allegedly autonomous agency that was integral to the survival of American capitalist democracy. Simultaneously, such critics of consumer society as C. Wright Mills understood classical understandings of the self as the cure for the mass conformity of white collar Americans.<sup>56</sup> As for Hollywood, it would follow in the footsteps of the fifties literary world, offering up individualistic or rebellious protagonists in such money-making films as *Picnic* (1955), *Guys and Dolls* (1955), *Some Came Running*(1958), and *Auntie Mame* (1959).

Like *The Front*, *Guilty by Suspicion* ends in a climactic courtroom scene where the protagonist confronts his accusers and invokes the First Amendment in his defense. And as with Hecky Brown in *The Front*, David Merrill tells the committee that he only attended a meeting of the Communist Party because he was interested in a girl. But Merrill also defends his participation in "Ban the Bomb" rallies, and argues that anyone that he knew who was a member of any political organization was only involved in the noblest of causes. *Guilty by Suspicion* is by no means a reactionary movie, but except for anti-proliferation – a cause that even the aforementioned anti-war Cato Institute could get behind – these causes go unnamed. There is no mention of Popular Front anti-racist and socialist causes célèbre such as the Scottsboro Boys or the Spanish Civil War. Furthermore, Merrill also comes across as a die-hard individualist, telling the committee that Hollywood's

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 35-39. Also see James Livingston, *Pragmatism, Feminism, and Democracy: Rethinking the Politics of American History* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 64-66.

radicals had no interest in him because he talked too much and too freely, and clearly would not tow a party line. De Niro's character, by his invocation of the right to freedom of speech and by his "rugged" individualist tendencies, personifies the ideal American character. But to Abraham Polonsky, who had originally fashioned Merrill after himself, he was quite unrecognizable. The film's final credits bear no mention of Polonsky, who insisted that his name be removed from the project, of which he stated: "It violates my esthetics, my politics, [and] my morality."<sup>57</sup>

### **The Majestic (2001)**

In the wake of the eighties "Reagan Revolution" and the rise of a conservative movement that combined neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies, self-proclaimed liberals (those aligned with the Democratic Party) strained to present themselves as politically relevant. Running for president in 1992, Bill Clinton positioned himself as a moderate "New Democrat." But the New Democrat, just like the Reagan Republican, looked old in some ways; he or she reached back to the immediate postwar period to inform his or her rhetoric. For liberal strategists, that meant articulating the importance of the "vital center." As Wendy Wall notes, the "vital center" appeared repeatedly in Clinton's speeches during his second term as President, and the language continued to be used later by influential Democratic Party members including Rahm Emanuel.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Navasky, "Has 'Guilty by Suspicion' Missed the Point?"

<sup>58</sup> Wall, *Inventing the "American Way"*, 297n25.

Written at the height of the postwar red scare, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.,'s 1949 influential work, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* was a plea for consensus politics as a means to preserve liberal democracy. On one hand, Schlesinger held firm on the values of the New Deal, and warned that giving increasing power to private enterprise would have "calamitous results."<sup>59</sup> But he warned of the dangers of both "far right" and "far left" ideology, and ultimately his call to arms was to not to defend the country against unchecked capitalism, but to prevent it from succumbing to Communism. In his foreword, Schlesinger himself admitted that throughout the book, Communism was given far more attention than threats from the other side.<sup>60</sup>

In the *Vital Center*, Schlesinger sought to reset the boundaries of the meanings of freedom. The book had emerged just one year after Henry Wallace's failed 1948 Presidential campaign, in which the candidate had touted the importance of economic freedom. Wallace, like those who would be targeted by the red scare in Hollywood, had consistently invoked Franklin Roosevelt's terminology, "Freedom from Want," to argue for the creation and extension of wartime programs for social justice and economic security, like the Fair Employment Practices Commission and the Office of Price Administration, both of which had been dismantled by pro-business Republicans and Southern Democrats shortly after the war. Economic freedom, for Wallace and his Progressive supporters, meant not freedom for enterprise, but the kind of freedom that derives from economic security

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<sup>59</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), x

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

and equality. Schlesinger was confident, however, that the problems of industrial society could be solved not by government regulation, but by a renewed faith in freedom, that is, the political freedom of individuals.

Schlesinger took care to isolate “civil liberties” from “civil rights,” and to dwell on the importance of the former. Indifference to civil liberties, Schlesinger argued, was central to the plague of radicalism that was threatening American society.<sup>61</sup> The only allowances that he makes for communists in *The Vital Center* are those for the civil liberties of the accused. Schlesinger attacks the House Committee on Un-American Activities as “reckless” and “appalling,” and calls for “principled liberalism,” like that of the American Civil Liberties Union, to protect “free discussion.”<sup>62</sup> Surveying the gains of the anti-communist movement in purging Communists and fellow travelers from organized labor, he asks “if we can defeat Communism as a political force within the framework of civil liberties, why abandon that framework?”<sup>63</sup>

By the mid-1950s, Schlesinger’s pro-civil liberties language was echoed by prominent liberal intellectuals in *Commentary* magazine, and as I have demonstrated in previous chapters, by films like *Storm Center*.<sup>64</sup> So perhaps it’s little surprise that as Democrats invoked Schlesinger’s manifesto in the nineties, so too did Hollywood take its lessons as those that the story of the blacklist would tell.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 204, 208-9.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 210.

<sup>64</sup> For example: Alan Westin, “Do Silent Witnesses Defend Civil Liberties?” *Commentary*, June 1953, 537-546; James Rorty, “The Anti-Communism of Senator McCarthy: It Slays More Friends Than Foes,” *Commentary*, Aug. 1953, 122-129.



It is worth noting that although he sided with Kazan in the Academy Awards controversy, in 1997 Schlesinger sought to critique Clinton's use of his work, suggesting that the President's rhetoric sat too close to Reagan's and not close enough to Franklin Roosevelt's.<sup>65</sup> Still, it is unlikely that the perennial anti-communist liberal would have had much complaint with the film industry's most recent Hollywood blacklist feature, *The Majestic*.

Director Frank Darabont's 2001 film *The Majestic*, written by Michael Sloane, is not interested primarily in telling the story of the Hollywood blacklist, and the characters and events in the film are wholly fictional. But the blacklist is central to the setup of the story, and the film, like *Guilty by Suspicion*, ends with the protagonist standing up to defend himself in front of HUAC inquisitors. In fact, that Darabont and Sloane did not set out to make a historically accurate blacklist movie makes the *Majestic's* place in the construction of blacklist popular memory no less important. And although films like *The Majestic* and *Guilty by Suspicion* performed below expectations in movie theaters, their prevalence on cable television and home video affords them influence in a culture where much of popular history is learned through film and TV.<sup>66</sup>

"Everything old is new again," wrote Sean Mitchell in the *Los Angeles Times*, interviewing *The Majestic's* writer, Michael Sloane, who noted to Mitchell that

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<sup>65</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "It's My 'Vital Center,'" *Slate Magazine*, Jan. 10, 1997, [http://www.slate.com/articles/briefing/articles/1997/01/its\\_my\\_vital\\_center.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/briefing/articles/1997/01/its_my_vital_center.html), accessed March 25, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Alan S. Marcus, "'It Is as It Was': Feature Film in the History Classroom," *Social Studies* 96, no. 2 (March/Apr. 2005): 61-67.

"blatant patriotism is very fashionable right now."<sup>67</sup> The release of *The Majestic* coincided with the national post-9/11 mood that saw Americans hanging flags outside of their windows and the U.S. Congress passing a wave of legislation that allowed the government to both suppress civil liberties and target immigrant and minority communities. Mitchell was writing about the film, prior to its release, in the context of what he termed the re-emergence of "red, white and blue warriors" on the big screen, of which actor Jim Carrey was presumably one. *The Majestic* was produced prior to the events of September 11, 2001, but Sloane noted that even he saw the film quite differently when he viewed it after the terrorist attacks. He further suggested that the movie could never been made in the 1970s, which by contrast lacked red, white and blue warriors, because *The Majestic* is "too old-fashioned." In the patriotic post-9/11 milieu, Mitchell describes *The Majestic*, in contrast to those of the counter-cultural and disillusion-infused seventies, as a "crucible for drawing out essential American values."<sup>68</sup> Such discourse also accompanied premature talk about a possible Academy Award nomination for Carrey's performance, and one for Darabont, who the press reported was at the time "2 for 2 with Best Picture nominations."<sup>69</sup> There was no talk, however, of *The Majestic's* allegedly timeless, "essential" and "old-fashioned" values being, in reality, constructions of a particular dominant discourse of the immediate postwar period.

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<sup>67</sup> Sean Mitchell, "Holiday Sneaks: This Year's Hero" *Los Angeles Times* Nov. 11, 2001: F10.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Patrick Goldstein, "The Big Picture: Oscar Candidates Will Soon Be as Plentiful as Fallen Leaves," *Los Angeles Times* Aug. 28, 2001, F1.

Darabont was attracted to *The Majestic* because of its Frank Capra-esque qualities. "Like a Capra film," he explains, "it deals with a very innocent, old-fashioned sense of decency and patriotism."<sup>70</sup> In the film, a rootless B-movie writer finds happiness in a small, northern California town that the filmmakers modeled after the town in Capra's classic populist film, *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). Jim Carrey plays the blacklisted, Peter Appleton, who soon after being exiled from the film industry, crashes his car on the Pacific Coast Highway and suffers amnesia. The inhabitants of the idyllic town mistake Appleton for a returned World War II hero who has been presumed dead, and they hail his return. Even the hero's father believes Appleton to be his son. Settling into life in the town of Lawson, Appleton meets a wholesome girl and falls in love, and he assists his assumed father in revitalizing the shuttered local movie theater, the Majestic. Appleton's assimilation to small town life progresses wonderfully until the FBI descends, revealing his true identity as a Hollywood screenwriter with alleged communist ties. As in *The Front* and *Guilty by Suspicion*, *The Majestic* climaxes with the subpoenaed Appleton having to make a moral decision whether or not to name names. Here, Appleton draws strength from his newfound small town sense of morality and patriotism. Invoking the heroics of the World War II casualty for whom Appleton was mistaken, he stands up in front of HUAC in the name of the First Amendment and all that is American. For Appleton, his defiant speech actually pays off; he is forgiven and

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<sup>70</sup> Tom Shone, "History Lessons: A Capra-esque Breakout for 'the Prison Guy,'" *New York Times*, Nov. 4, 2001, MT34.

allowed to return to work in the film industry. But small town life has won him over, and he decides not to return to Hollywood.

Carrey's character, Appleton, comes across as uninterested in politics, much more so than does *Guilty by Suspicion's* Merrill. Appleton is a writer of science fiction B-movies, and although he sees his latest script before he is blacklisted, one about a mining town, as his ticket to greater respect in the industry, *The Majestic* does not dwell on this movie's content. When asked by a bartender about his script, Appleton describes it vaguely as being about "truth" and "the human condition." This script appears to be an allusion to films such as *Grapes of Wrath* or *How Green Was My Valley*, films that Eric Johnston of the Motion Picture Association of America explicitly forbade Hollywood from emulating when the blacklist era was beginning, but little is made of this in the *Majestic*.<sup>71</sup> In fact, Appleton, like his fictional predecessors, explicitly vocalizes his aversion to politics and explains to both the studio and later to HUAC that he attended a meeting of the Communist Party only because he was interested in a girl. When Adele asks Appleton in private if he was ever a Communist, he tells her that he was not, and she quips, "I didn't think so. Only a died-in-the-wool capitalist could get the *Majestic* up and running."

Other allusions written into *The Majestic* sit uneasily with the film's general "old-fashioned" narrative. For example, that the small town is named Lawson is a reference to screenwriter John Howard Lawson, the leader of the Hollywood branch of the Communist Party and one of the Hollywood Ten. Another reference to John

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<sup>71</sup> Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 177.

Howard Lawson appears in the name of Appleton's swashbuckler B-movie: *Sand Pirates of the Sahara*. But whereas Lawson's 1943 film, *Sahara*, was an antifascist World War II movie that critiqued American racism, the small clip of *Sand Pirates of the Sahara* that is shown within *The Majestic* makes it appear to be an orientalist adventure fantasy that features an evil Arab antagonist. Marxist historian Gerald Horne may not have been watching *The Majestic* too closely when he praised the film for its subtle references to John Howard Lawson in his biography of the blacklisted screenwriter.<sup>72</sup>

Another puzzling allusion is presented when Appleton's love interest, Adele, tells him about her favorite film, *The Life of Emile Zola*, which recounts the history of the Alfred Dreyfus trial in France. The 1937 film – an actual movie, unlike *Sand Pirates of the Sahara* – largely fails to instruct the audience that Dreyfus was Jewish, and that the trial is best understood historically as an example of *fin de siècle* European anti-Semitism. The same goes for the *Majestic*; where the allusion could have given weight to an exploration of nativism and racism, it instead only serves to explain how Adele came to aspire to be a lawyer.

*The Majestic* not only represents the continuing trend of presenting blacklist narratives shorn of political contexts, but it furthers the literal “whitening” of the blacklist. Both Jim Carrey and Robert De Niro have “played Jewish” in other films, but audiences most likely understood De Niro's Merrill, alongside Martin Scorsese's character, as an Italian American, and thus there is a possibility that they may have

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<sup>72</sup> Gerald Horne, *The Final Victim of the Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 266-7.

understood the film intertextually with De Niro's other popular films that portray an Italian-American ethnic underclass.<sup>73</sup> Appleton on the other hand, can only be interpreted as Anglo-Saxon. In fact, *The Majestic* inverts the Jewishness of the blacklist by having Appleton find refuge in a small town with white inhabitants, as contrasted with the multi-ethnic and multi-racial Hollywood. While Lawson is authentically populist and American, Hollywood is portrayed as false. In the city, Appleton suffers through meetings with studio executives who are never seen, but their voices are shouted from offscreen for comedic effect. Played by Paul Mazursky, Carl Reiner, and Rob Reiner, as well as gentile Gary Marshall, their noticeable New York accents suggest that they are Jewish movie moguls.

One African American citizen proves the exception to the Anglo-Saxon rule in Lawson, but his presence reinforces liberal consensus ideology rather than challenges it. Emmett Smith is the town's ticket taker at the titular movie theater. He is a proud and dutiful employee and valuable friend to the theater's owner, Harry Trimble. But it is his obeisance that defines his character. And because he is elderly and single, Trimble lacks any sort of sexual identity. His place in the town is only acceptable as he is emasculated and of inferior social status to the town's white inhabitants, with whom he can mingle in ways that do not upset traditional ethno-racial societal norms or call attention to class divides.

*The Majestic* thus absurdly inverts the relationship between the Hollywood blacklist and the American politics of xenophobia that have historically posited the

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<sup>73</sup> Carrey played Jewish comedian Andy Kaufman in *Man on the Moon* (1999). De Niro played Jewish characters in *The Last Tycoon* (1976) and *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984).

small town or suburb against the big city. It reproduces the notion that the city is where “un-American” or “dirty” foreigners, immigrants, and African Americans live, a notion that has held sway in nativist and racist politics since the Victorian era, and one that has contemporary relevance, as Republican politicians that have revived the mantle of populism have suggested that small homogenous towns are the “real America.” And it reproduces the anti-Semitic views of Hollywood that pervaded the first half of the twentieth century, and contributed to HUAC descending on the film industry in the 1940s. Not only is the blacklist shorn from its political context, but the discourse of Americanism has been turned around in *The Majestic* to make a statement that reifies the worst stereotypes to which blacklisted themselves were victim.<sup>74</sup>

As blacklisted have had increasingly less input over the mass production of their own memories, the popular narratives of the entertainment industry blacklist have become increasingly more subject to the consensus ideologies of cold war and post-cold war America. Whereas Martin Ritt and Walter Bernstein sought to emphasize their understandings of the Jewishness of the blacklist, Irwin Winkler and Frank Darabont chose to downplay ethnic difference. And although *The Front* only cursorily addresses the radicalism of many of the blacklist’s victims, *Guilty by Suspicion* and *The Majestic* further circumscribes the potential lessons of the red scare within a consensus framework that emphasizes “Anglo-Saxon” American values like freedom of speech, individualism, and normative domesticity. Whereas

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<sup>74</sup> Steven Alan Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 30-37.

the victims of the blacklist sought to indicate the contradictions in dominant American ideology concerning economic and social justice, the popular blacklist narrative became one that celebrates the status quo.

### **One of the Hollywood Ten (2000)**

Around the same time that *The Majestic* was being shown in theaters, another blacklist movie was being screened. Written and directed by the Welsh filmmaker Karl Francis, *One of the Hollywood Ten* stars actor Jeff Goldblum and tells the true story of Herbert Biberman, a Communist Jewish film director who after being blacklisted and sentenced to prison for contempt of Congress, collaborated with Michael Wilson and Paul Jarrico to produce *Salt of the Earth* (1954) independent of the major studios that had blacklisted all three of them. *One of the Hollywood Ten* dramatizes the making of *Salt of the Earth*, which narrated the story of the Empire Zinc mining strike in Silver City, New Mexico with Mexican American that had themselves participated in the strike. Francis' film depicts the threat of the FBI as well as the attacks by local anti-communists and anti-unionists to the set of *Salt of the Earth*.<sup>75</sup>

Elements of Karl Francis's *One of the Hollywood Ten* contrast strikingly with popular theatrical blacklist representations. First, *One of the Hollywood Ten's* protagonist, Herbert Biberman, is a proudly anti-fascist member of the Communist

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<sup>75</sup> For more on *Salt of the Earth*: Herbert Biberman and Michael Wilson, *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965); Ellen Baker, *On Strike and On Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).



Party. Rather than writing them out of the story, Francis sought to sanction and champion the leftist politics of the Popular Front by highlighting the distinction between Hollywood communism as it was practiced and Soviet Stalinism. In several scenes, we learn that although Biberman is a dedicated communist, that he would in fact be castigated for his democratic ideals were he to be in the Soviet Union. Biberman's lawyer Ben Margolis paints Biberman as a "jazz intellectual," a kind of free thinker, and Biberman himself declares his anti-Stalinist viewpoint in several scenes. Just as the real Biberman did, the Biberman portrayed in the film stresses his adherence to "Jeffersonian" democratic values as he understood them.<sup>76</sup>

Biberman's principles remain unchanged throughout the film; it begins and ends with its protagonist a dedicated socialist, a democrat, a skilled movie director, and a loving husband. If there is any character arc at work in *One of the Hollywood Ten*, it is in the praxis by which he applies such principles during the filming of *Salt of the Earth*. In the second half of *One of the Hollywood Ten*, as the film narrates the making of *Salt of the Earth*, Biberman comes to realize that his film is a chance for the blacklisted to "practice what [they] preach," which not only involves hiring non-professional Hispanic actors, but also, allowing flexibility in the film's shooting schedule for the local actors to work their day jobs as necessary. Such a conflict not only affords space for Biberman's character to grow, but also for Juan Chacón, the male lead, to deliver an inspiring speech on the matters of "race and class" that the miners in Silver City have had to deal with their whole lives.

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<sup>76</sup> Biberman and Wilson, *Salt of the Earth*, 21, 58.

Second, *One of the Hollywood Ten* continually alerts its audience to the anti-Semitic nature of the blacklist by having characters shout epithets at Biberman and other explicitly Jewish characters. Frequent exhortations of “Commie Jew!” suggest a discursive link in the minds of anti-communists between Anglo-Saxon identity and Americanness. Biberman’s blacklisted wife, actress Gale Sondergaard, reinforces the link in a scene in which she confronts the FBI agents surveilling her home, taunting them to arrest her for playing “Russian music! Jewish music!” on her phonograph. One scene depicts the members of HUAC discussing the duplicitous way in which Jewish actors in the film industry changed their names. Later, Sondergaard tells HUAC that the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, a Popular Front anti-fascist organization, was formed in 1936 to protest the mass killings of Jews and Gypsies in Europe. This prescience betrays historical accuracy, but Sondergaard’s point is made for the film’s audience.

That Francis continually tries to paint the forces of the blacklist as anti-Semitic appears to be in the service of making a connection between Germany’s perpetrators of fascism and the cold warriors of the United States. In fact, *One of the Hollywood Ten* begins with a newsreel from 1937, cheerfully announcing the showing of the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* in New York City on the same night as the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles, where Gale Sondergaard wins the award for Best Supporting Actress and subsequently delivers a speech endorsing the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. In the next scene, as the film jumps ahead to 1945, an audience in a movie theater watches contrasting

newsreels, first of the masses of bodies that were discovered when Nazi death camps were liberated, and then of Ronald Reagan endorsing the fight against communism. As a European filmmaker, Karl Francis may also have been commenting on contemporary European anti-Semitism. It is also possible that he was attempting to draw out ideological similarities between mid-century anti-Semitism and the anti-Hispanic nativism that afflicted the miners of Silver City and persists throughout the United States at present.

There is a case of informing in *One of the Hollywood Ten*, drawn from real events just as the rest of the film is, but rather than serve as the film's denouement, its depiction is complete by the time the film reaches its halfway mark. Hollywood Ten member Edward Dmytryk, having already defied HUAC in 1947 and having served his jail sentence for contempt of Congress, decided to return to Washington, D.C. and cooperate with the committee in the early fifties in order to return to the film industry's good graces. In *One of the Hollywood Ten*, Biberman confronts Dmytryk in a tense scene, telling his former friend in no uncertain terms that Dmytryk has "betrayed" Biberman. Insult is added to injury when Biberman learns that Dmytryk is slated to make a film with Humphrey Bogart, the famous actor having been portrayed earlier in the film as a onetime friend of the Hollywood Ten who withdrew his support when the 1947 hearings began. Although Karl Francis makes clear his position on the matter, the moral problematic of "informing" is not the primary issue at stake in *One of the Hollywood Ten*. Perhaps coincidentally, the story arc that Karl Francis chose for his film is similar to that which Abraham

Polonsky wanted for his film, one in which HUAC is dispensed with early in the story and the protagonist subsequently attempts to continue to make movies.<sup>77</sup>

Stephen Holden of the *New York Times* hailed Jeff Goldblum's performance, and called *One of the Hollywood Ten* "refreshingly sulfurous."<sup>78</sup> But *One of the Hollywood Ten* did not fare much better in the 2000s than did *Salt of the Earth* in the 1950s; whereas *Salt of the Earth* was banned and boycotted until the sixties, *One of the Hollywood Ten* was condemned to air on the *Starz* cable television network and to play at a few Jewish film festivals. Historians Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner characterize *One of the Hollywood Ten* as "undeservedly obscure," and "ill-treated by distributors."<sup>79</sup> There was apparently little room in the entertainment industry for a movie about the blacklist that emphasized the progressive politics of its victims, that featured a Semitic protagonist, and that centered around the filming of a pro-labor protest film with a Latino cast. *The Majestic*, like *Guilty by Suspicion*, was not a box office success. But it can still be found on cable and in video rental stores. *One of the Hollywood Ten*, on the other hand, rarely airs on American television. There is no video or DVD of the film in publication, except for the Spanish language version, titled *Punto de Mira*, available only in European markets.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Navasky, "Has 'Guilty by Suspicion' Missed the Point?"

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Holden, "Back to an Era of Slurs, Paranoia and Persecution," *New York Times*, January 11, 2002, E37.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *Blacklisted: The Film Lover's Guide to the Hollywood Blacklist* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 167.

<sup>80</sup> A search on Worldcat.org for libraries holding *The Majestic* returns 1297 libraries. A similar search for *One of the Hollywood Ten* returns only the UCLA film archive, which holds the film in reel form only. Search conducted on December 9, 2009.

## The Blacklist in Allegory

If no feature film about the entertainment industry's red scare has ever been a box office smash, the most famous and widely read or viewed stories about the blacklist are those in which it is reduced to allegory.<sup>81</sup> Consider the case of *The Crucible*, for example, Arthur Miller's 1953 Broadway play about the Salem Witchcraft Trials. In the play, attention-seeking girls accuse each other of being in league with the devil, the chief accusations eventually falling upon Salem resident John Proctor, who has carried on an illicit affair with one of the accusers, complicating his claim to innocence. Much of the drama plays out in the Salem meeting house, where the accusing girls fear that if they ease up on their scapegoats, they will themselves face the wrath of the town and the opportunistic deputy governor.<sup>82</sup> With this, Arthur Miller hoped to draw parallels to the blacklisting of alleged communists, and in particular, was writing in response to friend and film and stage director Elia Kazan's decision to name names in front of HUAC, a decision that Miller could not forgive. Critics and audiences in 1953 were well aware of the parallels.<sup>83</sup> Even if Miller himself played them down in certain interviews, he annotated the published text of *The Crucible* with lengthy notes about modern day

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<sup>81</sup> Examples of blacklist allegory include: *High Noon* (1952) and the television series *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955-1960). *On the Waterfront* (1954) is the rare pro-blacklist allegory. Of course, allegory only works if it is understood as such, and even if it the intention for it was never there, as was the case with *The Robe* (1953), Albert Maltz's alleged critique of HUAC, even if he wrote it a year before they came to Hollywood. Jeff Smith, "Are You Now or Have You Even Been a Christian?" in *"Un-American" Hollywood*, eds. Frank Krutnick, et al. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 22.

<sup>82</sup> Arthur Miller, *The Crucible: Text and Criticism*, ed. Gerald Weales (New York, Penguin Books, 1996).

<sup>83</sup> Gerald Weales, "Introduction" in Miller, *The Crucible: Text and Criticism*, xiv-xvi.

witch hunts in the Soviet Union as well as the United States, in one instance noting that “in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell.”<sup>84</sup> But as the blacklist fades into memory, allegory does increasingly less in making apt political statements.

Victor Navasky championed the cinematic version of *The Crucible* when it was released in 1996. Writing as a guest film reviewer for the *New York Times*, in the pages of which he had defended Abraham Polonsky version of the *Guilty by Suspicion* script five years earlier, Navasky begins the review with an overview of *The Crucible's* historical context. It took 43 years to get the movie made, Navasky argues, because of the story's anti-red scare politics. But Navasky concludes that the story is not about “McCarthyism” at all, but “rather it was about something more universal – fear of forces one can't understand and control.” He spins the allegory out to suggest *The Crucible's* relevance to debates on the Christian Right, satanic cults, rap music, and most substantively, the recent rash of allegations of child molestation that were directed towards parents and which proved unsubstantiated in many cases.<sup>85</sup> But who might argue that parents should not be falsely accused of child molestation?

In *Turncoats, Traitors, and Fellow Travelers*, Arthur Redding argues that Miller's text must be read in the context of “freedomism,” a discursive force that subjugates the expression of certain thoughts, specifically those that might be

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid; Miller, *The Crucible*, 34.

<sup>85</sup> Victor Navasky, “The Crucible: The Demons of Salem, with Us Still,” *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1996, 37.

painted as totalitarian or un-American, even as it does so by elevating the idea that one is free to think them.<sup>86</sup> “Proctor is the embodiment of time-honored frontier virtues,” notes Redding, suggesting that in Miller’s choice of allegory, one that recalls progressive Popular Front “Americanism” on one hand but reduces it to “freedomism” on the other, he allows nativism and exceptionalism to “[sneak] in through the back door.”<sup>87</sup> It is unlikely that Arthur Miller wanted his play to endorse nativism or exceptionalism, although the general consensus that “naming names” is a moral crime is certainly due in part to the reception of Miller’s work. That’s not a bad thing, but pedagogically, his play can only inform the reader of the dangers of the breakdown of civil liberties, and it certainly does not provide historical context as to what those behind the orchestration of the blacklist feared from the left. It, as well as other allegories of anti-communist blacklists only allow for a careful examination of the moral quandary of naming names, and they have undoubtedly influenced the production of the aforementioned films that deal more directly with the historical events of the blacklist themselves. Blacklisted writers and directors fought hard to combat their loss of employment, and even brought a case before the Supreme Court, but in doing so they were forced to sideline more radical Popular Front causes in favor of their own civil libertarian cause.<sup>88</sup> This shift – not simply

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<sup>86</sup> Redding borrows the term from Frances Stonor Saunders. Arthur Redding, *Turncoats, Traitors, and Fellow Travelers: Culture and Politics of the Early Cold War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

<sup>88</sup> *Wilson v. Loew’s, Inc.*, 355 U.S. 597 (1958).

from the left to the right, but rather down the scale from civil rights to civil liberties – has left an indelible mark on the politics of the postwar era.

### **Memory and the Blacklist**

The case of the blacklist suggests new ways of understanding how collective memory is formed in the context of a mass culture industry. Scholars of American historical memory, Michael Kammen and John Bodnar, have suggested that “popular memory” exists alongside “collective memory” as a more “authentic” means of transmitting memory.<sup>89</sup> But in an era of mass culture, we see how the two are one and the same. “Popular memory” can only prevail, it would appear, if it adopts the perspective of more pervasive ideologies. Furthermore, we must be cautious and recognize that our understandings of “authenticity” and the “popular” are themselves socially constructed. Cultural historians trained in social history are fond of using “popular” texts, that is those created by the people, or “folk,” but such analysis denies the ways in which “popular culture” is part of a cycle of mass production and consumption that is hegemonic and heavily mediated, as other historians have noted.<sup>90</sup>

More recently, Alison Landsberg has argued that mass culture provides a new form of remembering, what she terms “prosthetic memory.” Landsberg

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<sup>89</sup> Michael G. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>90</sup> Lawrence Levine et al., “AHR Forum,” *American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (Dec. 1992): 1379-1430.



suggests that film allows subcultures to experience one another's histories, thus creating a cross-pollination of collective memory that leads to greater understandings among ethnic and racial groups. But Landsberg does not acknowledge how some of her subjects of analysis, films like *Schindler's List*, are successful in part because their messages coincide with dominant American values.<sup>91</sup> Ultimately, whether we wish to understand the ways in which societies remember in an age of mass culture as "popular memory," "collective memory," or "prosthetic memory," of which all three may undoubtedly prove useful, we should recognize how prevailing ideologies or myths shape the construction and reproduction of such memories.

But scholars of blacklist history still quarrel over the politics of blacklisted individuals without considering the long term implications of the blacklist on culture and memory. For example, Allis and Ronald Radosh's *Red Star Over Hollywood* suggests that popular and scholarly discourses subversively gloss over the radical politics of the blacklist. The authors emphasize the illegality of membership in the American Communist Party, and conclude by stating that the far left still has sway over film narratives today.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, in A.M. Eckstein's sympathetic review of *Red Star Over Hollywood*, the author argues that the production of films such as *The Majestic* and *Guilty by Suspicion* represents "the greatest propaganda victory ever achieved by the CPUSA," ignoring their particular

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<sup>91</sup> Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>92</sup> Allis Radosh and Ronald Radosh, *Red Star Over Hollywood: The Film Colony's Long Romance with the Left* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2005).

production histories and the prevalence of consensus values in their messages.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, in the recent *Hollywood's Blacklists*, Reynold Humphries updates Andrew Sarris's classic thesis about the films of the fifties that downplays the role of the blacklist. Humphries, who is far more sympathetic to the blacklisted than the Radoshes or Sarris, reaches the conclusion that for all of the damage that the red scare inflicted, the quality of films in the fifties was not significantly degraded, and he makes no suggestion about the cold war's impact on film culture.<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile, Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, arguably the two most influential and prolific historians of the Hollywood blacklist, have sanctioned the memory put forth by *The Majestic*, calling it "among the best" blacklist movies.<sup>95</sup>

This analysis of the entertainment industry blacklist in popular historical memory suggests the need to assume a more critical stance. The very way in which the blacklist is remembered onscreen suggests that the architects of cold war liberal anti-communism – those who sought to push a vision of an American "consensus" by defining the United States as homogenous, free of class conflict, and embodying cultural values identified as Anglo-Saxon – attained some measure of success in buttressing a post-racial, civil libertarian ideology that continues to constrain American politics and culture.

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<sup>93</sup> A.M. Eckstein, "Not Just Another Political Party," *American Communist History* 5, no. 1 (2006): 115.

<sup>94</sup> Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 139-141. This thesis was previously articulated by critic Andrew Sarris, "A Few Kind Words for the '50s," *Village Voice*, Sept 14, 1982, 47.

<sup>95</sup> Buhle and Wagner, *Blacklisted*, 138. Elsewhere, Buhle notes the film's "WASPy" cast but otherwise recommends it: Paul Buhle, "The Majestic," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 3 (2002): 1171-1172.

## **Epilogue: The Banality of Freedom**

In 2012, when President of the United States Barack Obama was campaigning to keep his seat from Republican Mitt Romney, it seemed possible that the language of American culture might become less individualistic. Inspired by the rhetoric of Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren, Obama delivered speeches that stressed the connections among citizens upon which an individual's success or failure depended; this discourse was often referred to by the awkward phrase "you didn't build that," words of Obama that were singled out by Republican commentators. At times, the language of the Democratic Party almost echoed that of the grassroots left wing protest movement, Occupy Wall Street, which called for solidarity among the "99 percent," those many Americans that have not amassed enormous amounts of capital. Conversely, Mitt Romney fell into trouble when, on the campaign trail, he suggested that he didn't care about the "47 percent," Americans who failed to earn enough money to pay federal income taxes. If the media reporting of the story was accurate, this was a gaffe that cost him votes on election day.<sup>1</sup>

Barack Obama was re-elected, not by an overwhelming margin, but a safe one. Still, little changed afterwards. Since the 1980s, the United States government

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Baker, "Philosophic Clash Over Government's Role Highlights Parties' Divide," *New York Times*, Jul. 19, 2012, A18; Andrew Rosenthal, "Romney's Reflections," *NYTimes.com*, Jul. 29, 2013, <http://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/29/romneys-reflections/?smid=pl-share>.

has consistently adopted practices to liberalize the economy, deregulating markets, defunding social welfare, and marketizing or privatizing previously public services. Obama's rhetoric had always been as producerist as it was progressive, but after the 2012 campaign, the public language of shared social responsibility dissipated rapidly. If there was one constant in political culture, it was the symbolic language of freedom, which had been wielded most effectively by the right-wing libertarian Tea Party Movement since its emergence in 2009. In an array of post-election social issues, from gay marriage to firearms to the size of "Big Gulp" fountain sodas, Americans seemed to favor liberty.

And the liberty they favored was often a symbolic ideal. As with the case of the discourse surrounding firearms, this idealization manifested in slippery slope arguments that emphasized the hypothetical futures cooked up by fear mongers rather than the grim realities of neoliberal society. Activists for "gun rights" suggested that any attempts to regulate the gun market would lead the country down a path towards a totalitarian police state. Meanwhile, Chicago and other urban centers suffered from an epidemic of gun violence, and tragic mass killings in more affluent communities made headlines. The ideology of American freedom – presumably one of "color-blind" market liberalism but actually encoded with normative white and Christian symbols and "values" – proved powerful enough to overcome the social realities of the post-Fordist present.

As Obama and Romney were hitting the campaign trail, Americans were going to see *The Avengers*, the 2012 summer blockbuster that became that year's

highest grossing film.<sup>2</sup> In *The Avengers*, the intergalactic villain Loki has to compete for screen time with the very large eponymous cast of superheroes. This might be why Loki's motivation for descending upon Earth and later ravaging New York City was so efficiently scripted. Rather than plotting out a long backstory, the filmmakers simply employed the symbolic language of freedom.

When Loki arrives on Earth and makes his presence known to a crowd of men and women in Stuttgart, Germany, he delivers a speech declaring his intentions. He has to come to free humans, he states, by making them unfree. "Is this not simpler?" he asks after directing the crowd to kneel before him, arguing that "the bright lure of freedom diminishes your life's joy." Loki's speech presents him as a simple totalitarian, one who seeks to convince the people that autonomy and individualism impose a too-heavy burden, that of free choice. An older gentleman stands up to Loki, making an allusion to Adolf Hitler (referring to "men like you" in a German accented voice) that is reinforced by Captain America's appearance on the scene. Captain America remarks that the last time he was in Germany – during World War II, before he was frozen in a cryogenic state for half a century – he faced a similar minded foe. The exchange between Loki, the German man, and Captain America signifies the degree to which the latter two understand and appreciate the preciousness of liberty. This brief scene sets the stakes of the entire film; In Hollywood's terse and economical language, *The Avengers* are freedom fighters.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Avengers* topped the lists for both 2012 domestic grosses and 2012 worldwide grosses. "2012 Domestic Gross," *BoxOffice*, [http://www.boxoffice.com/statistics/alltime\\_numbers/domestic/data/2012/](http://www.boxoffice.com/statistics/alltime_numbers/domestic/data/2012/); "All Time Worldwide Box Office: Worldwide Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/>.

In a way, Loki's speech is unimportant to the film; its an aside, a short break from the otherwise nearly nonstop action that characterizes most contemporary blockbuster movies. But its seemingly innocuous presence illustrates the near ubiquity and the banality of the libertarian language of political freedom. It also masks certain assumptions. By positioning Loki as a totalitarian, it implicitly suggests that those who *are* able to exercise political freedom – for example, Americans under a liberal democracy – are not subject to forces that might influence or circumscribe individual choice. It ignores postmodern subjectivity as well as the un-freedom of material inequality. And it ignores, to use the words of governmentality scholar Nikolas Rose, the ways in which freedom operates not only as a “formula of resistance” but also as a “formula of power.”<sup>3</sup>

The language of freedom is even more prominent in 2012's critically lauded and Oscar-nominated *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, which screened in theaters that same summer. In some ways, the two films could not be more different. *The Avengers* is a big budget spectacle meant to appeal to the broadest possible audience. It stars several A-list actors and was filmed with high-definition digital 3d cameras. On the other hand, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* is an independent film, shot by a “resourceful New Orleans-based collective” using 16-millimeter film, according

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<sup>3</sup> Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 65. Rose argues that there is a concrete difference between the discourses of freedom that contest power and those that govern; I am not so sure.

to film critic A.O. Scott.<sup>4</sup> *The Avengers* is meant to be mindless fun, while *Beasts of the Southern Wild* telegraphs its social conscience and its arthouse ambitions.

The story of *Beasts of the Southern Wild* centers upon Hushpuppy, a young black girl, and her small multi-racial community in the Louisiana bayou. Hushpuppy lives in a swampy wilderness untamed by the society that exists inside the bounds of the levee system. The bayou's inhabitants are depicted as somewhat impoverished, but they are nourished by nature's bounty. In a watery twist on the centuries-old myth that finds the archetypal American character in yeoman agrarianism, the proudly independent swamp dwellers appear to have found harmony with nature in their distance from modern life. But when bad weather comes – a storm that is undoubtedly meant to conjure thoughts of Hurricane Katrina – and simultaneously an illness besets Wink, Hushpuppy's father, the nature of the community is upset.

If there were one example of contemporary film that best illustrates the development of the post-racial, civil libertarian discursive strands that I have identified in blacklist-era popular culture, one that might serve as our genealogical *telos*, it might be *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. The film proudly and stubbornly finds the answer to the characters' problems in rejecting the welfare state and its concomitant post-modern model of the subject. *Beasts of the Southern Wild* revels in a kind of ambiguous racial progressiveness and features a post-Bush allusion to Hurricane Katrina, but in reality, Americans were angry at President George W.

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<sup>4</sup> A.O. Scott, "She's the Man of This Swamp," *New York Times*, June 27, 2012, C1.

Bush not because he was paternalistic towards the poor and working class people of color in New Orleans, but because he seemed to be blind to their suffering and unwilling to commit enough resources to aid them in the aftermath of the 2005 storm.

At the same time that Republicans in Washington, D.C. were fighting to repeal the Democrats' 2010 Affordable Care Act, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* had its suffering character Wink reject hospital care, not because he couldn't afford it, but because it would allegedly inhibit his individual freedom. The film lauds Wink's "lawless, reckless, independence," to use the words of influential academic and activist bell hooks, but as she argues, this trait stems from the most "hateful stereotypes" of black men.<sup>5</sup> The film is a critique of modern society that revels in and fetishizes the lifestyles of its most marginalized victims.

bell hooks and other critics have focused largely on *Beasts of the Southern Wild's* racial stereotypes, often employing a critique of the film's "noble savage" trope. Instead of placing race at the center of my analysis, I want to emphasize what *Beasts of the Southern Wild* tells us about contemporary attitudes towards modes of liberalism. The film articulates a utopian vision of society where autonomy and abstract notions of freedom and choice are preferable to a modern welfare state which might mitigate material inequality. Here once more, race operates as a fulcrum by which this kind of discourse of liberal governance is articulated. *Beasts*

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<sup>5</sup> bell hooks, "No Love in the Wild," *NewBlackMan (in Exile)*, entry posted Sept. 5, 2012, <http://newblackman.blogspot.com/2012/09/bell-hooks-no-love-in-wild.html> (accessed May 13, 2013).



*of the Southern Wild* continues the work of distancing race matters from the realm of civil rights and moving it towards that of civil liberties, the same work that a diverse array of actors, including communists, anti-communists, Jews, and African Americans, carried out in the period of the postwar red scare. Just as the artifacts of popular culture that I have explored in previous chapters – liberal civil rights films, anti-communist pictures, television shows scripted by leftists, and productions of blacklist memory – have contributed in various ways to the post-racial, neoliberal language endemic to contemporary popular culture and larger cultural discourse, so does contemporary popular racial liberalism. We might note that two of the country's most popular black figures, President Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey, have endorsed *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. Both of these figures, in different ways, have presented themselves in ways that scholars and critics have critiqued as “post-racial.”<sup>6</sup>

It's not difficult, once you start looking, to find the language of freedom everywhere. What then is the relationship between the symbolic language of freedom that saturates American culture and the failure of social democratic visions to take hold among the American people? Literary critic Kenneth Burke proposes that symbolic language creates what he terms a “terministic screen” through which individuals form ideas and worldviews. According to Burke, what seem like natural

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<sup>6</sup> Olivia Waxman, “President Obama to Oprah: Watch *Beasts of the Southern Wild*,” *Time*, Aug. 27, 2012, <http://entertainment.time.com/2012/08/27/president-obama-to-oprah-watch-beasts-of-the-southern-wild/>. For more on Oprah Winfrey, see Janice Peck, *The Age of Oprah: Cultural Icon for the Neoliberal Era* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008). On Barack Obama, see: Aura Bogado, “The First Couple's Post-Racial Bootstraps Myth,” *The Nation*, May 21, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/174449/first-couples-post-racial-bootstraps-myth>; Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Fear of a Black President,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 310 no. 2 (Sept. 2012): 76-90.

“observations” are simply “implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made.”<sup>7</sup> The language of civil libertarianism that emerged out of the early cold war period has since blanketed the rhetorical terrain of American discourse. According to Burke then, this rhetoric forms a terministic screen which has a powerful tendency to shape the networks of belief of those who receive it. With particular respect to the contemporary language of freedom, governmentality scholar Nikolas Rose argues that this discourse then comes to “define the ground of our ethical systems.” As Rose suggests, we need to interrogate the ubiquity of this language, not because it’s a “sham” or because one is “for freedom or against it,” but because ideas about freedom are historically constructed, and are articulated in disparate ways that reinforce, create, or challenge systems of power.<sup>8</sup>

The narrative of the Hollywood blacklist served as a “usable past” for those who sought to understand the racist and imperialist programs of governance that were made intelligible by the Johnson and Nixon administrations of the 1960s and 1970s. But that period has long since elapsed. Contemporary self-identified liberals or progressives who laud the racial liberalism of *Beasts of the Southern Wild* are eager to discuss the Hollywood blacklist and the “shameful” actions of anti-communists, but so are libertarians that might identify as being “on the right.” These latter figures have even utilized the blacklist narrative in cautioning their

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 46.

<sup>8</sup> Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 10.

followers that a new Hollywood blacklist has descended upon the film industry. Before his passing, journalist Andrew Breitbart most notably sounded the alarm on a phenomenon in which, he argued, actors that are vocally conservative are unable to find work. His protégé, Benjamin Shapiro, has continued the project of decrying the alleged left-wing control of Hollywood.<sup>9</sup>

Whether or not the “new blacklist” resembles the old one is debatable, but more significantly, the co-optation of the blacklist narrative – an example of what Kenneth Burke called the “stealing back of forth’ of symbols” – suggests something about the meaning of the symbols themselves.<sup>10</sup> Because the dominant narrative of the blacklist stresses overzealous state governance, the abrogation of civil liberties, and individual moral failings, the blacklist can buttress the grievances of a libertarian right. In contemporary debate, referencing the blacklist is like dipping into a wellspring of readily available political points, perhaps akin to invoking Adolf Hitler or Nazi Germany.

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Breitbart, “Enemy of the State,” *Washington Times*, Aug. 4, 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/aug/4/blacklist-now-ii-enemy-of-the-state/print/>; “Take AIM: Andrew Breitbart,” *Accuracy in Media*, May 5, 2011, <http://www.aim.org/podcast/take-aim-andrew-breitbart/>; David Weigel, “Meet the Breitbarts,” *Slate.com*, March 21, 2012, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/politics/2012/03/the\\_empire\\_that\\_andrew\\_breitbart\\_built\\_is\\_struggling\\_to\\_maintain\\_its\\_brand\\_now\\_that\\_its\\_founder\\_is\\_dead\\_.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2012/03/the_empire_that_andrew_breitbart_built_is_struggling_to_maintain_its_brand_now_that_its_founder_is_dead_.html). On the “new blacklist,” also see: John Nolte, “The New Blacklist: Rachel Maddow Declares ‘Witchhunt’ Against Huckabee Animators,” *Breitbart News: Big Hollywood*, May 13, 2011, <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Hollywood/2013/01/12/Does-Tarantino-Stand-Alone-Against-Government-Censoring-Films>, accessed Jan. 15, 2013; Matthew Sheffield, “James Woods on Left’s Hollywood Blacklist: ‘I Don’t Expect to Work Again,’” *Newsbusters*, Oct. 10, 2013, <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/matthew-sheffield/2013/10/10/james-woods-left-s-hollywood-blacklist-i-don-t-expect-work-again>, accessed Nov. 23, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, third edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 141.

But those points are cheap. To restore value to the story of the blacklist, and to imbue it with new meaning, we must understand it as a factor in the construction of a postwar liberal discourse and subjectivity. Instead of framing it as a shameful moment in our past, we need to consider the blacklist as part of a genealogical investigation of our neoliberal present. Only then might it become a tool with which we can interrogate, deconstruct, and maybe even refashion the symbolic language of freedom.

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