

75th Anniversary of the Hollywood Blacklist Takes on Added Significance With Escalation of New Cold War

By [Ed Rampell](#)

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Let's Hope History Does Not Repeat

This month marks the 75th anniversary of the start of the Hollywood Blacklist. On October 27, 1947, screenwriter John Howard Lawson, the first member of what came to be known as the "Hollywood Ten," [testified](#) before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC).

The contentious, testy testimony before a gavel-banging congressman in Washington launched the Hollywood Blacklist, in which members of the motion picture industry who refused to "cooperate" with HUAC by informing on themselves and others about their leftist politics were forbidden from working in the movies until roughly 1960.

This was when the Hollywood Ten's Dalton Trumbo received screen credits under his real name (instead of a pseudonym) for writing *Spartacus* (1960) and *Exodus* (1960).

The Hollywood Ten served prison time and were fined for refusing to answer questions such as "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" and for declining to rat out others.

This conservative cancel culture, enforced by the movie studios and the U.S. government with the aid of the FBI, prevented about 300 talents from being able to earn a living in the cinema—because of their politics and beliefs.

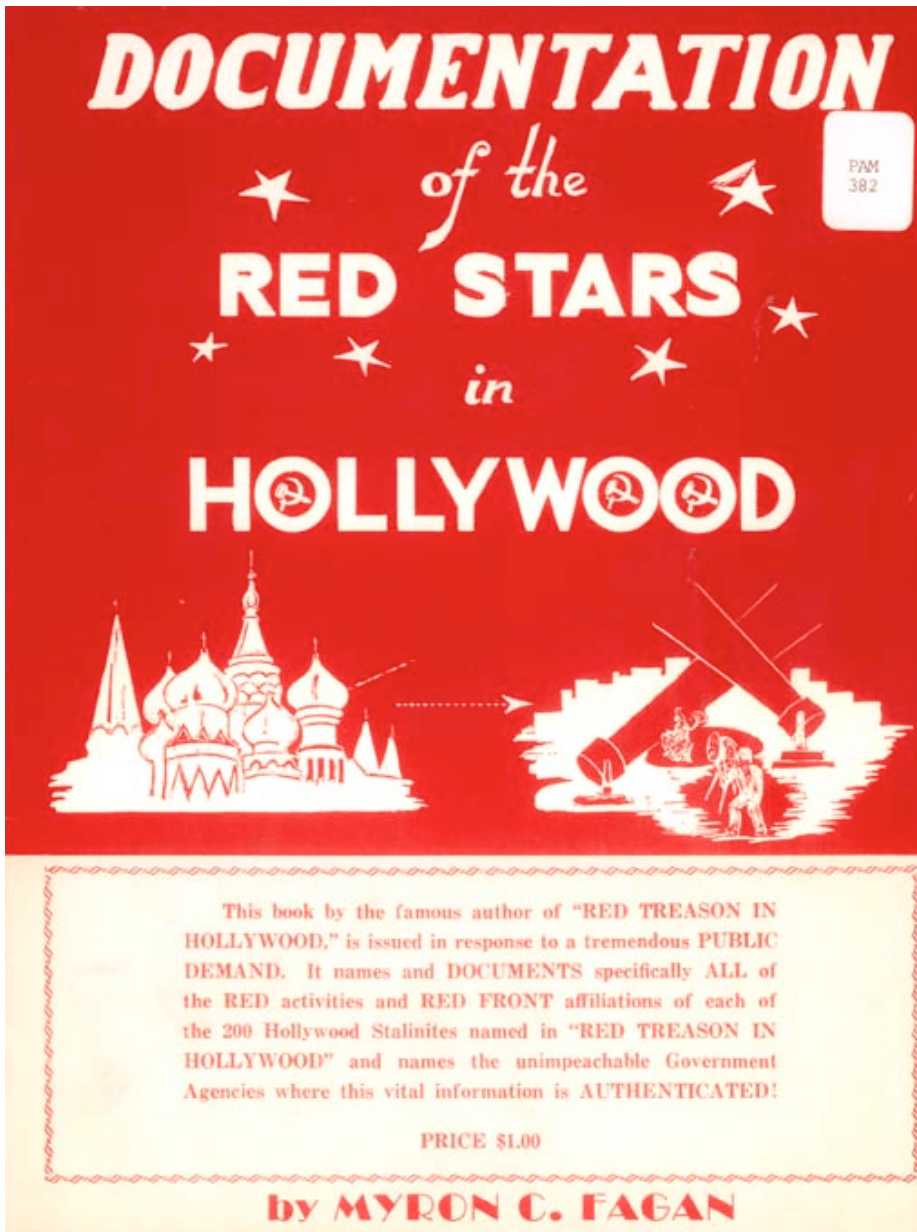


Photo courtesy of Ed Rampell

The inquisition in Tinseltown in turn paved the way for the larger repressive Red Scare of McCarthyism during the 1950s, which decimated the American left and fostered the rightward shift in American politics away from the New Deal.



Reds-under-the-beds zealotry of the Blacklist period. [Source: [oscars.org](https://www.oscars.org)]

Commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Hollywood Blacklist kick off on October 13, 2022, as Turner Classic Movies launched a film series with the premiere of the excellent short, *High Noon on the Waterfront*. This compelling 14-minute documentary co-written/co-directed by David C. Roberts and Billy Shebar shows how two artists ensnared in the Blacklist metaphorically expressed their stands regarding the motion picture purge through their films.

Elia Kazan, the quintessential informer who collaborated with HUAC and “named names” of other suspected radicals, directed *On the Waterfront* (1954), a movie that justified informing.



Source: [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

Carl Foreman, who was blacklisted and eventually moved overseas in order to be able to continue making movies, wrote the allegorical Western *High Noon* (1952), with the frontier town of Hadleyville—where Gary Cooper is forsaken by the townsfolk and must take a stand against evil by himself—symbolizing Hollywood during the Blacklist.



Source: [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

Using the actual written words of the talents, Kazan is voiced by John Turturro, while Ed Norton speaks Foreman's lines. The short creatively intercuts between scenes of *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront*. Here is the TCM schedule:

Thursday, October 13	
<i>Special Theme: 75th Anniversary of The Hollywood Blacklist – Night 1</i>	
8:00 PM	<i>High Noon on the Waterfront</i> (2022)
8:30 PM	<i>High Noon</i> (1952)
10:00 PM	<i>High Noon on the Waterfront</i> (2022)
10:30 PM	<i>On the Waterfront</i> (1954)
12:30 PM	<i>High Noon on the Waterfront</i> (2022)
<i>Marsha Hunt's Sweet Adversity</i>	
1:00 AM	<i>Marsha Hunt's Sweet Adversity</i> (2015)
3:00 AM	<i>Carnegie Hall</i> (1947)
Thursday, October 20	
<i>Special Theme: 75th Anniversary of The Hollywood Blacklist – Night 2</i>	
8:00 PM	<i>Salt of the Earth</i> (1954) (Herbert Biberman, Paul Jerrico, Will Geer, Rosaura Revueeltas, Michael Wilson)
10:00 PM	<i>A King in New York</i> (1957) (Charlie Chaplin)
12:00 AM	<i>The Brave One</i> (1956) (Dalton Trumbo)
2:00 AM	<i>Time Without Pity</i> (1957) (Joseph Losey)
Thursday, October 27	
<i>Special Theme: 75th Anniversary of The Hollywood Blacklist – Night 3</i>	
<i>Looking Back</i>	
8:00 PM	<i>The Way We Were</i> (1973)
10:15 PM	<i>The Front</i> (1976)
12:00 AM	<i>The Majestic</i> (2001)
* All times Eastern Daylight Time	

On October 21 a movie about the production of the Orson Welles-directed 1936 play that came to be known as *Voodoo Macbeth* opens. In it, Texas Congressman Martin Dies, who co-

started what came to be HUAC, is depicted as race-baiting and red-baiting *Voodoo Macbeth*'s all-Black cast and its crew. About 11 years later, the congressional committee Dies set into motion turned from the stage and set its sights on the screen. The film *Voodoo Macbeth* is being theatrically released October 21. For more information, see voodoomacbethfilm.com.

L.A.'s new Academy Museum, dedicated to film culture and history, is also reportedly planning a Blacklist series in Spring 2023. Oona Chaplin—whose grandfather Charlie directed and starred in 1957's anti-HUAC *A King in New York*—is presenting a BBC podcast on the Blacklist in 2023.



Members of the Hollywood community who formed the Committee for the First Amendment flew from L.A. to Washington during the 1947 HUAC hearings to support and defend the Hollywood Ten. At the bottom of the airstair is actress Marsha Hunt, a civil libertarian who was blacklisted even though she was never a Communist Party member. Marsha died in September 2022 at age 104 and is chronicled in the documentary TCM is airing, *Marsha Hunt's Sweet Adversity*, on October 13. [Source: Photo courtesy of Ed Rampell]

As book banning, media blacklisting and school board prohibitions on teaching history accelerate, and as a new cold war with Russia is being launched, it is important for Americans to remember when the First Amendment was forgotten in Hollywood.

Stay tuned—and down with censorship!

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Featured image: A demonstration to free the Hollywood Ten along with members of the Ten and their supporters. [Source: indiewire.com]

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