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The Blacklisters' Bible: *Red Channels*

If there was an official blacklist in the entertainment industry, *Red Channels* was it. Issued on June 22, 1950, just three days before the outbreak of the Korean War, it was a compilation of the allegedly subversive affiliations of 151 writers, directors, and performers.¹ Its

¹Those listed were Larry Adler, Luther Adler, Stella Adler, Edith Atwater, Howard Bay, Ralph Bell, Leonard Bernstein, Walter Bernstein, Michael Blankfort, Marc Blitzstein, True Boardman, Millen Brand, Oscar Brand, J. Edward Bromberg, Himan Brown, John Brown, Abe Burrows, Morris Carnovsky, Vera Caspary, Edward Chodorov, Jerome Chodorov, Mady Christians, Lee J. Cobb, Marc Connelly, Aaron Copeland, Norman Corwin, Howard Da Silva, Roger De Koven, Dean Dixon, Olin Downes, Alfred Drake, Paul Draper, Howard Duff, Clifford J. Durr, Richard Dyer-Bennett, José Ferrer, Louise Fitch, Martin Gabel, Arthur Gaeth, William S. Gailmor, John Garfield, Will Geer, Jack Gilford, Tom Glazer, Ruth Gordon, Lloyd Gough, Morton Gould, Shirley Graham, Ben Grauer, Mitchell Grayson, Horace Grenell, Uta Hagen, Dashiell Hammett, E. Y. ("Yip") Harburg, Robert P. Heller, Lillian Hellman, Nat Hiken, Rose Hobart, Judy Holliday, Roderick B. Holmgren, Lena Horne, Langston Hughes, Marsha Hunt, Leo Hurwitz, Charles Irving, Burl Ives, Sam Jaffe, Leon Janney, Joe Julian, Garson Kanin, George Keane, Donna Keath, Pert Kelton, Alexander Kendrick, Adelaide Klein, Felix Knight, Howard Koch, Tony Kraber, Millard Lampell, John La Touche, Arthur Laurents, Gypsy Rose Lee, Madeline Lee, Ray Lev, Philip Loeb, Ella Logan, Alan Lomax, Avon Long, Joseph Losey, Peter Lyon, Aline MacMahon, Paul Mann, Margo, Myron McCormick, Paul McGrath, Burgess Meredith, Ben Myers, Arthur Miller, Henry Morgan, Zero Mostel, Jean Muir, Meg Mundy, Lynn Murray, Dorothy Parker, Arnold Perl, Minerva Pious, Samson Raphaelson, Bernard Reis, Anne Revere, Kenneth Roberts, Earl Robinson, Edward G. Robinson, William N. Robson, Harold Rome, Norman Rosten, Selena Royle, Coby Ruskin, Robert St. John, Hazel Scott, Pete Seeger, Lisa Sergio, Artie Shaw, Irwin Shaw, Robert Lewis Shayon, Ann Shepherd, William L. Shirer, Allan Sloane, Howard K. Smith, Gale Sondergaard, Hester Sondergaard, Lionel Stander, Johannes Steel, Paul Stewart, Elliot Sullivan, William Sweets, Helen Tamiris, Betty Todd, Louis Untermeyer, Hilda Vaughn, J. Raymond Walsh, Sam Wanamaker, Theodore Ward, Fredi Washington, Margaret Webster, Orson Welles, Josh White, Irene Wicker, Betty Winkler, Martin Wolfson, Lesley Woods, Richard Yaffe.

Red Channels, American Business Consultants, New York, 22 June 1950, 16–17, 75–77, 79–80, 90, 110–13, 155–56.

authors—three former FBI agents and an aspiring television producer named Vincent Hartnett—drew their citations from a miscellaneous potpourri of left-wing letterheads, clippings from the Communist party's *Daily Worker*, and the publications of HUAC and other investigating committees.

Each individual entry contained from one to forty-one citations, annotated to indicate the source of the incriminating information. Some of the allegedly Communist groups cited in *Red Channels* were, like Consumers Union, the publisher of *Consumer Reports*, politically innocuous. Most, however, were the so-called front groups, organizations like those on the attorney general's list (see Document 9) that had close ties to the Communist party. Although party members belonged to these groups, so too did non-Communists. In addition, *Red Channels* treated the 1948 presidential campaign of Henry Wallace and the Progressive party as a questionable activity, as it also did any sign of public opposition to the anti-Communist purges.

Many of the individual entries were simply wrong—cases of mistaken identity or erroneous listings and false reports in the Communist press. Others ignored history and treated as suspect the willingness of many American entertainers to rally support for the Soviet Union as part of the U.S. war effort. Of the two citations that derailed actor Joe Julian's career, one was for an innocuous public appearance during World War II and the other for a meeting that he walked out of when he discovered its sponsors had Communist ties. Lena Horne, like many African American entertainers, got into *Red Channels* because of her support for left-wing civil rights groups.

The following selections are representative. They show the types of affiliations that *Red Channels*' compilers considered subversive as well as the sources of information they used. What they do not show is the damage the booklet inflicted. It temporarily (and sometimes permanently) ruined the careers of almost every entertainer whose name appeared in it. "Nobody has to tell me not to use anybody listed in *Red Channels*," an account executive in an advertising agency explained at the time. "I just know not to."

Red Channels: *The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*

1950

Lillian Hellman

PLAYWRIGHT, AUTHOR

REPORTED AS:

Independent Citizens
Committee of the Arts,
Sciences, and Professions
Progressive Citizens of
America, National Arts,
Sciences, and Professions
Council

Speaker, Theatre Panel, Conference of
the Arts, Sciences, and Professions,
6/22, 23/45. *Daily Worker*, 6/10/45, p. 14.
Participant, Cultural Freedom
Conference, 10/25, 26/47. *Daily Worker*,
10/27/47, p. 2.

National Council of
American-Soviet
Friendship

Signer. Women's Committee. Greetings
to women of Soviet Union in celebration
of International Women's Day. *Daily
Worker*, 3/9/48, p. 5.

Member. *Daily Worker*, 3/26/48, p. 7.

National Wallace for
President Committee
Harlem Women for
Wallace
"New Party" (Wallace)

Speaker, 6/9/48; gave forceful tribute to
Wallace. *Daily Worker*, 6/10/48, p. 6.

Member, Platform Committee, 7/23/48.
Daily Worker, 7/19/48, p. 5.

Member, Initiating Committee. *Daily
Worker*, 9/21/48, p. 7.

Moscow Art Theatre

Sent greetings to directors and members.
Celebration of Moscow Art Theatre's
50th Anniversary. *Daily Worker*, 11/1/48,
p. 13.

Progressive Party

Attended three-day conference. *Daily
Worker*, 11/16/48, p. 5.

National Council of the
Arts, Sciences, and
Professions

Signer. Statement calling for abolition of
House Committee on Un-American
Activities. *Daily Worker*, 12/29/48, p. 2.

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Scientific and Cultural
Conference for World
Peace

Signer. Invitation to conference. *Daily
Worker*, 1/10/49, p. 11.
Member, Program Committee. *Daily
Worker*, 2/28/49, p. 9.

Amicus Curiae Brief

Signer. Petition to Supreme Court to
review the conviction of [John Howard]
Lawson and [Dalton] Trumbo.

Moscow Theaters

Plays, "The Watch on the Rhine," "The
Little Foxes," performed in Moscow
theaters. *Soviet Russia Today*, 10/45,
p. 32.

American Committee for
Democracy and
Intellectual Freedom

Signer. Petition to discontinue Dies
Committee. *House Un-Am. Act. Com.*,
Appendix 9, p. 331.

American Committee to
Save Refugees; Exiled
Writers Committee of the
League of American

Chairman, "Europe Today" dinner forum,
10/9/41. *House Un-Am. Act. Com.*,
Appendix 9, p. 357.

Writers; United American
Spanish Aid Committee

Sponsor, Refugee Scholarship and Peace
Campaign, 8/3/39. *House Un-Am. Act.
Com.*, *Appendix 9*, p. 410.

American League for
Peace and Democracy

Signer. Advertisement asking for help on
behalf of the Russian people, 10/10/41.
House Un-Am. Act. Com., *Appendix 9*,
p. 475.

Russian War Relief, Inc.

Participant. Meeting, 10/16/42. *House
Un-Am. Act. Com.*, *Appendix 9*, p. 575.

Artists' Front to Win the
War

Member and sponsor, 1941. *House Un-
Am. Act. Com.*, *Appendix 9*, p. 599.

Citizens Committee for
Harry Bridges
Equality

Member, Editorial Council, 12/39. *House
Un-Am. Act. Com.*, *Appendix 9*, p. 698.

Friends of the Abraham
Lincoln Brigade

Sponsor, 6/11/38. *House Un-Am. Act.
Com.*, *Appendix 9*, pp. 753-56.
Sponsor. Disabled Veterans Fund,
3/22/39. *House Un-Am. Act. Com.*,
Appendix 9, p. 753.

- Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee Sponsor: Dinner, 10/27/43. *House Un-Am. Act. Com., Appendix 9*, p. 941.
- The League of Women Shoppers, Inc. Vice-president *House Un-Am. Act. Com., Appendix 9*, pp. 1007-10.
- National Emergency Conference for Democratic Rights Signer: "Open Letter to the United States Senate." *House Un-Am. Act. Com., Appendix 9*, p. 1212.
- Progressive Committee to Rebuild the American Labor Party Member, Executive Committee. *House Un-Am. Act. Com., Appendix 9*, p. 1500.
- Statement by American Progressives on the Moscow Trials Signer, 5/3/38. *House Un-Am. Act. Com., Appendix 9*, p. 1617.
- Theatre Arts Committee Member, Executive Board. *House Un-Am. Act. Com., Appendix 9*, p. 1626.
- Frontier Films Member, Advisory Board, 4/6/37. *Un-Am. Act. in California*, 1948, p. 96.
- Lena Horne**
- SINGER—STAGE, SCREEN, RADIO
- REPORTED AS:
- American Committee for Protection of Foreign Born Speaker: Mass Rally. *Daily Worker*, 3/3/48, p. 7.
- Civil Rights Congress Speaker: *Daily Worker*, 10/6/47, pp. 5, 8. Speaker: Civil Rights Congress of N.Y. Conference, Manhattan Center, 10/11/47. Program.
- Citizens Non-Partisan Committee for Re-election of Benjamin J. Davis² to the City Council Supporter: *Daily Worker*, 9/25/45, p. 12.

²Benjamin Davis was a leading African American Communist who served on the New York City Council in the early 1940s and was convicted under the Smith Act in 1949 along with the Communist party's other top leaders.

- New Masses* Received award from *New Masses* Dinner Committee. *New Masses*, 1/23/45, p. 32. Contributor. *New Masses*, 9/16/47, p. 16.
- People's Songs Sponsor: *Bulletin of People's Songs*, 5/47.
- Council on African Affairs Sponsor: South African Famine Relief. Letterhead, 5/4/46.
- United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America Participant. Radio program, "Fighters for Liberty." *Daily Worker*, 2/9/48, p. 13.
- Southern Conference for Human Welfare Fund raiser. *People's Daily World*, 5/25/48, p. 5.
- United Negro and Allied Veterans of America, Inc. Affiliated. *Daily Worker*, 7/2/47, p. 4. Member, National Advisory Board. Letterhead.
- Outstanding women who received praise of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Listed. *The Worker*, 3/9/47, p. 7.
- Communist Party celebration in honor of Benjamin J. Davis Announced as performer by Communist Party State Committee, 5/6/45, Golden Gate Ballroom, NYC. *U.S. Senate Hearings on S1832*, p. 593.
- Joe Julian**
- ACTOR—RADIO
- REPORTED AS:
- Artists' Front to Win the War Speaker: Meeting, 10/16/42. *House Un-Am. Act. Com., Appendix 9*, p. 575.
- National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions Attended meeting to abolish House Un-American Activities Committee, Hotel Commodore, NYC, 1/9/49. *NY Journal-American*, 12/30/48.

*In memory of Andrea Eagan
(1943-1993)*

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