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 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 derailing 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
National Council of American-Soviet Friendship
National Wallace for President Committee
Harlem Women for Wallace
"New Party" (Wallace)
Writers for Wallace
Moscow Art Theatre
Progressive Party
National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions

Participant, Cultural Freedom Conference, 10/25, 26/47. Daily Worker, 10/27/47, p. 2.
Member, Initiating Committee. Daily Worker, 9/21/48, p. 7.
Attended three-day conference. Daily Worker, 11/16/48, p. 5.

Scientific and Cultural Conference for World Peace

Amicus Curiae Brief

Moscow Theaters


American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom

American Committee to Save Refugees; Exiled Writers Committee of the League of American Writers; United American Spanish Aid Committee

American League for Peace and Democracy

Russian War Relief, Inc.

Signer. Invitation to conference. Daily Worker, 1/10/49, p. 11.
Member, Program Committee. Daily Worker, 2/28/49, p. 9.
Signer. Petition to Supreme Court to review the conviction of [John Howard] Lawson and [Dalton] Trumbo.

American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom

American Committee to Save Refugees; Exiled Writers Committee of the League of American Writers; United American Spanish Aid Committee

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American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom

American Committee to Save Refugees; Exiled Writers Committee of the League of American Writers; United American Spanish Aid Committee

American League for Peace and Democracy

Russian War Relief, Inc.


Artists' Front to Win the War

Citizens Committee for Harry Bridges

Equality

Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee  

The League of Women Shoppers, Inc.  

National Emergency Conference for Democratic Rights  

Progressive Committee to Rebuild the American Labor Party  

Statement by American Progressives on the Moscow Trials  

Theatre Arts Committee  

Frontier Films  

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**Lena Horne**

**SINGER—STAGE, SCREEN, RADIO**

REPORTED AS:

American Committee for Protection of Foreign Born  

Civil Rights Congress  
Speaker. Civil Rights Congress of N.Y. Conference, Manhattan Center, 10/11/47. Program.

Citizens Non-Partisan Committee for Re-election of Benjamin J. Davis to the City Council  

备注：Benjamin Davis 是一位重要的非洲裔美国人共产主义者，他于1940年代末在纽约市议会任职，并在1949年因《史密斯法案》被定罪。他与共产党的其他高层领导同时行事。

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**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**

Council on African Affairs  

United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America  

Southern Conference for Human Welfare

United Negro and Allied Veterans of America, Inc.

Outstanding women who received praise of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

Communist Party celebration in honor of Benjamin J. Davis

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**Joe Julian**

**ACTOR—RADIO**

REPORTED AS:

Artists’ Front to Win the War

National Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions


In memory of Andrée Eagan
(1943–1993)

For Bedford/St. Martin's
Publisher for History: Patricia A. Rossi
Developmental Editor: Louise Townsend
Senior Production Supervisor: Dennis J. Conroy
Marketing Manager: Jenna Bookin Barry
Project Management: Books By Design, Inc.
Text Design: Claire Seng-Stiemoeller
Indexer: Books By Design, Inc.
Cover Design: Richard Emery Design, Inc.
Cover Photo: Joseph McCarthy, Bettmann/Corbis.
Composition: Stratford Publishing Services, Inc.
Printing and Binding: Halden Craftsmen, an R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company

President: Charles H. Christensen
Editorial Director: Joan E. Peinberg
Director of Marketing: Karen K. Melton
Director of Editing, Design, and Production: Marcia Cohen
Manager, Publishing Services: Emily Berleth

Library of Congress Control Number: 2001089428

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BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN'S
Boston New York