

Hollywood ten members



The 1950's are remembered for the highly publicized Joseph McCarthy hearings that focused on exposing the communist supporters and sympathizers that were living in the United States. However, it is important to examine the social and political changes that began three years prior with the establishment of HUAC. The House Committee on Un-American Activities, or HUAC, was a committee created and supported by the United States government that subpoenaed and questioned individuals of the Hollywood community in regard to their alleged communist affiliations. The group that received the most attention referred to ten Hollywood screenwriters and directors who were marked as communists while working in the film industry during the late 1940's. This group of men, known as the infamous "Hollywood Ten", was subpoenaed by HUAC on October 1947. The Hollywood Ten defended themselves during their hearings by utilizing one of four rhetorical strategies. (1) They emphasized their loyalty and dedication to the United States, (2) they initially cooperated with HUAC but then refused to answer questions due to HUAC's bantering and constant interruptions, (3) they defended themselves by supplying HUAC with names of other individuals with the intent to clear their reputations, and finally, (4) they counter-attacked HUAC for their un-American approach to the allegations.

In late October of 1947, there was a nation-wide crackdown on communism in America; numerous historians examine the communist infiltration in Hollywood, focusing specifically on the Hollywood Ten. John Cogley's book, *Blacklisting: Two Key Documents* (1971), contends that blacklisting violated the civil liberties of the individuals who were requested to participate in HUAC's hearing. Cogley participated in a study known as The Fund for the

Republic, which was a series of studies that examined the damage caused by anticommunism. He interviewed executives of the motion picture industry, unions, actors, reporters and agencies to gain information on how the HUAC hearings violated the civil liberties of those who were subpoenaed for alleged communist activities. He argues that the founding principles of blacklisting are not well known and that these missing facts are important to fully understanding why civil liberties were violated. This book helps understand how the civil liberties of those subpoenaed by HUAC were violated. Cogley utilized oral history interviews and government documents to support his research. This author does not address the rhetorical strategies used by Hollywood Ten members.

A Journal of the Plague Years

Stefan Kanfer's book, *A Journal of the Plague Years* (1973), summarized that show-business is not separate from the national environment and that Hollywood personnel are more accurate interpretations of their Era than politicians. Kanfer's research focuses on the entertainment profession, particularly cinema and broadcasting, but addresses blacklisting in Hollywood as well. This book ha He maintains that historians mistakenly concentrate their focus on government investigations and their witnesses, such as HUAC and the Hollywood Ten. The author believes that by looking at the entertainment profession, one can see all the aspects of national politics through the eyes of Hollywood personel and not politicians. Kanfer's book supported this topic by providing background information on what was occurring in Hollywood and the entertainment world during this time in history and also helped answer the specific reasons why the Hollywood Ten

were targeted. Kanfer's research included information that was taken from oral histories, testimonies, and government documents. This author does not address the rhetorical strategies used by Hollywood Ten members.

The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community

In the book, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (1979), written by Larry Ceplair and Steve Englund, the authors maintain that as the times changed from 1940's liberalism to the 1950's McCarthy era. Those viewed as Hollywood activists would be prime target for communist speculation, due to their radical activities in the Hollywood community. Ceplair and Englund looked at the political and professional contexts of the Hollywood Ten; they claim that many historians overlook the idea at how successful the Hollywood Ten were as radicals; because they were unable to create alliances with liberals. According to these two historians, those that were targeted in the late 1940's had spent almost two decades professionally and financially participating in a host of progressive and radical causes. Ceplair and Englund's book contributed to this research by discussing the importance of the radical activity the Hollywood Ten members were involved with before they were subpoenaed by HUAC. The information that was gathered for their research on this particular topic came from local and national newspapers, pamphlets for national interest groups, and government information files. This author does not address the rhetorical strategies used by Hollywood Ten members.

Victor Navasky in *Naming Names* (1980) asserts that by looking at the HUAC informants, one is able to gain a more accurate understanding of the conditions of the time period. The 1940's, a period, he describes was one

where good men did things they knew were wrong, such as betraying their fellow comrades to save themselves from the social stigma that came with being labeled as a communist. Navasky maintains that the political system of the 1940's was portrayed as a system that violated the values of a Republic and viewed specific American citizens as enemies of the state. This author does not address the rhetorical strategies used by Hollywood Ten members. Navasky's information for his research was compiled through the use of oral histories, interviews, and political documents.

Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace

Kenneth O'Reilly's book, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (1983), concludes that the FBI's relationship with HUAC helped promote the anticommunist movement by working with HUAC. O'Reilly asserts that the progression of anti-communism was accelerated through the FBI's relationship with HUAC. Based on their uncovering of communist activity in Hollywood, FBI informers were hurrying to appear before the committee and testify against alleged communists. The support of the FBI in the hunt for communism heightened the intensity of detecting communist infiltration as well as increasing the power of HUAC during these hearings. O'Reilly's research helped the study of this topic by providing background information of the FBI informants who assisted HUAC in the hearings against the Hollywood Ten. During his study, O'Reilly used government records, certain secondary sources, testimonies, and The Freedom of Information Act for FBI files concerning informants of the HUAC hearings. This author does not address the rhetorical strategies used by Hollywood Ten members.

Otto Frederich in City of Nets: A Portrait of Hollywood in the 1940's

Otto Frederich in *City of Nets: A Portrait of Hollywood in the 1940's* (1986), demonstrates how during the start of WWII, Hollywood citizens all held differing social, political, and cultural views of Hollywood. He argues that unlike other historians, he does not want to solely focus on personal interviews because he feels that alleged communist affiliates have already spoken about their hardships and interactions with HUAC. To support to his theory, Friedrich read over five-hundred books ranging from scholarly studies to analyses of memoirs to prove that the views of every individual of the Hollywood Ten and HUAC was completely and uniquely different. Frederich's extensive research of this topic is important to this paper because it provides numerous thoughts and ideas of people who have written about the Hollywood Ten and this particular time period. Frederich also used secondary sources of previous historians to find primary sources for his research. This author does not address the rhetorical strategies used by Hollywood Ten members.

Neil Gabler's book, An Empire of Their Own

Gabler's book, *An Empire of Their Own* (1988), suggests that individual members of the Jewish population in Hollywood, were extensively involved in talent agencies and movie productions, and then targeted by Red-Baiters due to the belief that Judaism was a variety of communism. Gabler views the Hollywood Jewish community as a homogenous group that helped build the movie industry. He argues that since Jews were not socially accepted, they had to create their own empire through film and production agencies. The films created by these agencies had the primary goal of portraying American values through the eyes of the Jewish community. This historian concludes <https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-ten-members/>

that due to the Jewish community creating this empire, movies defined American values of the time period. This book gave a thorough understanding of the Jewish community in Hollywood; the majority of the Hollywood Ten members were Jewish and this book helped illuminate why there was a stigma placed on the Jewish community. Gabler utilized oral histories, secondary sources, and movie/film reviews to support his research for this topic. This author does not address the rhetorical strategies used by Hollywood Ten members.

A Critical Study of the Hollywood Ten

Bernard Dick, in his book *Radical Innocence: A Critical Study of the Hollywood Ten* (1989), demonstrates that in order to understand the Hollywood Ten members, one must shift from the politics of the Hollywood Ten and focus more clearly on their work to fully understand if their movies suffered as a result of their political positions. Dick focuses on the fiction, non-fiction, plays, poetry, and films of the Hollywood Ten- he felt that by examining their material he was able to interpret their rational and ideas behind their art. He felt that by looking at the memoirs and histories, it overshadows the more significant work of the Hollywood Ten; Dick concludes that some historians and critics who have researched the Hollywood Ten still treat the group with the same scrutiny and criticism that they experienced during their blacklist days. Dick's book assisted my topic by focusing on the works of the Hollywood Ten and gives supportive background detail on the works that are mentioned in their testimonies. Dick also used personal memoirs, some secondary sources, and histories of the Hollywood Ten members to support his research.

The Power and Glitter of the Hollywood-Washington Connection

Ronald Brownstein's book, *The Power and Glitter of the Hollywood-Washington Connection* (1990), illustrates that Hollywood's influence on national politics and its altering role over the course of time helped illuminate the truths of American political life and gave a more intimate understanding of the importance of Hollywood in national politics and the individuals who were blacklisted. Brownstein focused on the world of show-business and politics; he didn't look at political themes in movies as he felt other historians did. Instead, he examined how individuals in the Hollywood community were intertwined with the politics of the time. Brownstein's research helped this paper by providing background information on Hollywood politics and how they were intimately involved with national politics during the 1940's; this provides ample detail as to why the Hollywood Ten were targeted. The materials and sources Brownstein used in order to accumulate credible information for his research included government documents, oral histories, and newspaper articles.

Gerald Horne in Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950

Lastly, Gerald Horne in *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950: Moguls, Mobsters, Stars, Reds, and Trade Unionists* (2001), argues that the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), which was a federation of craft unions, was locked out in 1946 due to an alleged labor dispute. However, Horne argues that this is what initially set the stage for the emergence of the blacklist in 1947. Horne believes that Hollywood labor disputes demonstrate that the Second Red Scare influenced an attack on militant "unionism". He believes that the labor management conflict in Hollywood during 1946, involving the CSU and The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage

<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-ten-members/>

Employees, was only a cover-up to disguise a dispute between alleged communist activities within the unions. Horne's book greatly contributed to this research by offering an alternate view on information and ideas as to why the blacklist emerged in the late 1940's. This book also provided extensive background information that is relevant to understanding the Hollywood Ten's blacklist experience. Horne used labor records and oral histories as primary sources for his research.

Although scholars have examined the effects of communism within Hollywood and how the HUAC hearings affected the members of the Hollywood Ten, they have not fully explored how each of the HUAC hearings was unique. This paper will focus on the rhetorical strategies of the Hollywood Ten members who were placed under investigation by HUAC. It is important to understand the significance of this topic because it explains the popular social issues of the time period and how each hearing was not the same in its rhetorical proceedings. This research will be exploring an uncharted idea that is not commonly associated with this topic. The research being done will address some of the ideas that other historians have already written about but will give a greater emphasis on the uniqueness of each individual HUAC hearing. However, this paper will be utilizing some of the primary sources that some historians who have already covered this topic have used for their research.

Researching the Hollywood Ten was important to understand that the Hollywood Ten were not the first group to be singled out by our government. The practice of blacklisting reaches as far back as the early 1920's. During the Hays commission, there were scandals on movies produced by Arbuckle

<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-ten-members/>

and Chaplin. Anyone associated with writing, acting on and off the screen was scrutinized. Next, in 1938, under the chairmanship of Texas Congressman, Martin Dies, a committee was started and called The House Committee on Un-American activities. It was utilized to review groups that were prone to communistic ways or practices. At that time, the group that was targeted had Marxist ideologies. Also, other various organizations that were representing Marxist views or affiliations were under scrutiny.

WWII, blacklisting

Keep in mind, after WWII, blacklisting hit a peak when communism, fascism, and democracy clashed around the world. Hostility in politics became a perfect mixture to place paranoia around all governing regimes. So, after WWII, our governments decided to squash all communistic or dictator trends and prevent it anywhere in our states.

Then, ironically with a twist of fate, The United States and Russia become allies. It was also noted that anti-communistic investigations lessened too. At this time, movie producers created films depicting moral on the home front to boost the Americans and the Soviet people as well. One of the Soviet movies was called " Song of Russia". It was very popular. Eventually, Soviet films would be misconstrued as pro-communist support or red propaganda. It took two years after the war for the movies to be cleared of communism intent. This under taking took place by the chairmanship of Representative J. Parnell Thomas. He was a Republican from the state of New Jersey. He was also a veteran of the Dies era and a nonjudgmental politician.

The first wave of the attack against the Hollywood Ten came at the insistence of committee member John Rankin. He had announced as early as 1945 that he had word of, “ One of the most dangerous plots ever instigated for the overthrow of this government. It has its headquarters in Hollywood. We’re on the trail of the tarantula now and we’re going to follow through. The best people in California are helping us.” The Hollywood Ten were called to testify and the investigation started. The first witness called, John Howard Lawson, set the tone for the group by refusing to answer the fatal question directly. The Committee found Lawson in contempt, as it did the rest of the witnesses who refused to answer to “ Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?” Lawson, along with Dalton Trumbo, Samuel Ornitz, Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, Adrian Scott, Albert Maltz, Ring Lardner, Jr., and Edward Dmytryk became known as the Hollywood Ten.

Rhetorical strategy utilized by Albert Matz

The first rhetorical strategy utilized by Albert Maltz was a dramatic emphasis on his patriotism and loyalty to the United States. Maltz was an Ivy League graduate who began his career as a playwright for the Theatre Union during the early 1930’s. In 1945, he was nominated for an Academy Award for Writing Adapted Screenplay but was later blacklisted and assumed to be part of the communist movement in America. On October 28th, 1947, Maltz began his hearing during the HUAC investigations. He was given permission to read his personal statement to the committee; in his statement, Maltz claimed that that he was pro-American and that the committee was trying to challenge him by making claims that he was Un-American and subversive.

Maltz also claimed that the committee was the only thing un-American. He supported his claims of being pro-American by saying that his work had been reprinted by over 30 American publishers. Maltz also questioned the committee as to why he would be classified as being subversive when his work had been supported by the American government military on many occasions. He used quotes from American presidents to support his American patriotism in his memoirs. Maltz also explained that the committee made statements against past American presidents, such as FDR's New Deal policies and how they were communist-like in their goals and agendas. His citing of HUAC's comments supported his claims of HUAC's un-Americanism, with them going as far as targeting an American president and national icon that had done so much for the country. Maltz also claimed that the committee believed the KKK to be an acceptable American institution, due to their pro-American ideals. This claim ultimately suggested that the committee viewed racism and social violence as valid American ideals. Maltz made a statement that Americans were ultimately left with two choices: to either choose between the Bill of Rights or HUAC's ideologies and that one cannot choose both. He insisted that the committee went after groups they personally did not like and that the main point for targeting the motion picture industry was due to problems that had existed between Washington and Hollywood for years.

The second rhetorical strategy focused on individuals who at first were cooperative with HUAC but then refused to answer any more questions due to HUAC's constant interruptions. Dalton Trumbo was yet another important member of the Hollywood Ten whose rhetorical strategy fell into this

category. Trumbo was a renowned American screenwriter and novelist who got his start working with Vogue magazine. His 1940 film, *Kitty Foyle*, got him an Academy Award nomination for Writing Adapted Screenplay.

Trumbo's hearing took place on October 28th, 1947. Trumbo asserted that the committee's increased strength was something that adapted over time, following WWII. In referring to the power and persuasion of HUAC, Trumbo said that they were more powerful, more feared, and more determined than ever before and that eventually HUAC's power would ultimately make life difficult in American society. In his memoir, Trumbo states that the only way to destroy the committee was to challenge them and refuse their questioning. He goes on to say that one can either collaborate with "members of destruction" or destroy the committee's power and mark their limitations. He was intimately involved with Hollywood labor unions and when questioned about his communist involvement, Trumbo contended that the labor unions have a right to secrecy involving their membership lists. Trumbo writes in his memoir that he does not believe in the idea of "a mite restricted" free screen, referring to restrictions of what can and cannot be presented in films. Trumbo cooperated to the best of his ability with HUAC's questioning; however due to HUAC's bantering, he refused to answer any more questions. This was supported with the committee confronting Trumbo on his lack of cooperation by asking, "Are you refusing to answer the questions!" Due to Trumbo's resilience to HUAC's questioning, he was then excused and his hearing came to an end.

Dalton Trumbo was not the only Hollywood Ten member to utilize silence during his questioning; Adrian Scott was yet another member of the

Hollywood Ten who falls into this rhetorical category. During the height of his career as a Hollywood producer, Scott's movie *Crossfire* (1947) was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture. However, due to his blacklisting, he then wrote under an alias for the British television series, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Adrian Scott's hearing took place on October 29th, 1947. The statement that Scott submitted was based on anti-Semitism and his involvement with the movie *Crossfire*. Since the film received the Academy Award nomination and was widely accepted by the American public, Scott claimed that the committee's allegation of the movie being a pro-communist propaganda tool was a conspiracy directed towards eliminating good people. After Scott read his statement to the committee, the committee referred to his statement as "one of the worst" they have ever read, further illustrating HUAC's goal to downgrade all who opposed their views of what was communist and what was not. During his testimony, HUAC continually bombarded Scott with questions and did not accept his responses as valid answers. Scott became upset during this point in his hearing and only responded with "I beg your pardon?" to HUAC's questioning. From that point on, Scott refused to answer any more of the committee's questions and was therefore asked to leave.

Samuel Ornitz in hollywood ten

Like Scott, Samuel Ornitz attempted to answer the committee's questions but was also constantly interrupted during his testimony. Ornitz was born in New York City to a Jewish family. He got his start in the film industry by participating with the writing of a film in 1929 and then later became one of the founding members of the Screen Writers Guild in 1933. His testimony

and memoir reflected his view point that communism was a way to be creative through the arts, and that capitalism spoils society. Ornitz explained in his memoirs that he viewed capitalists as unconscious scientists who attempt to exploit people in order to make them public examples of communist affiliations. Initially, Ornitz remained cooperative with the committee during his hearing that took place on October 29th, 1947. However, he wanted to answer the questions in his own way but HUAC continually interrupted him during his explanations. When HUAC began demanding answers, Ornitz responded, “ I am replying to that question to the best of my ability and in spite of the interruptions.” While Ornitz never actually refused to answer any of the committee’s questions, he was not able to elaborate or give any proper substance to his answers, due to the committee’s constant interruptions. His testimony clearly illustrated his attempt to cooperate with HUAC but his answers were repeatedly cut short and remained unanswered.

Lester Cole in Hollywood Ten

Lester Cole was the final member of the Hollywood Ten who did not comply with HAUC’s assertive questioning. Cole began his career as an actor but then later became a screenwriter. He joined the American Communist Party in 1934 and was later convicted of contempt of Congress, for which he served a ten month sentence in prison. He viewed HUAC as a Stalinist group, a group that had a quest for power and abused power in order to exert influence over those who opposed them. Cole believed that if one didn’t abide by HUAC’s demands, they would be viewed as anti-American. Cole alleged that humanity’s history would not begin until racism was wiped out,

the exploitation of man was abolished, and that impediments, such as political affiliations, were removed everywhere. Lester Cole's hearing took place on October 30th, 1947. Like Ornitz, Cole also wanted to answer the committee's questions in his own way, not with the standard "yes" or "no" as the committee preferred him to. While beginning to explain his answers to the committee, Cole was consistently interrupted and accused of being uncooperative. Similarly to Samuel Ornitz, Lester Cole was excused from his hearing without having properly answered any of the committee's questions.

The third rhetorical strategy focused on how Edward Dmytryk defended himself by supplying HUAC with the names of other individuals, with the intent to clear his reputation and expose others. Dmytryk was an American film director who was born in British Columbia, Canada. Like fellow Hollywood Ten member Lester Cole, Dmytryk was convicted of contempt of Congress and served time in prison for his communist affiliations. During his hearing on October 29th, 1947, Dmytryk proved to be exceedingly cooperative with HUAC and testified against fellow Hollywood Ten member, Adrian Scott. Dmytryk was very close to Adrian Scott because of their collaboration on the movie *Crossfire*; as previously stated, HUAC viewed this film as a form of pro-communist propaganda. Dmytryk's close affiliation with this film and its producer, Adrian Scott, would instantly place him at the center of pro-communist activity in the Hollywood community, thus placing him under intense scrutiny. In order to escape and avoid these complications with HUAC, Dmytryk decided to briefly turn against his former co-worker and projected the majority of the accusations on Scott. When questioned by HUAC regarding his political affiliations, Dmytryk claimed that the only reason

he joined CPUSA was to help benefit America and that the Democratic and Republican parties did not have such a program. He claimed that the Communist party (CPUSA) was also associated with many other organizations, such as the Educational Center, Writers Mobilization, and the Hollywood Citizen's Committee of the Arts. During his hearing, Dmytryk continued to argue his pro-American position and also claimed that he was no longer affiliated with the CPUSA. Dmytryk's strategy involved placing the blame on other individuals and other organizations that were allegedly involved with pro-communist activity in America, rather than focusing on the political aspect of the testimony.

The final rhetorical strategy utilized by some members of the Hollywood Ten was a blatant counter-attack against HUAC for their un-American approach to the allegations. One of the Hollywood Ten members to utilize this strategy was John Howard Lawson. He was an American writer and head of the Hollywood division of the American Communist Party. Lawson, with the help of Lester Cole and Samuel Ornitz, established the Screen Writers Guild. During his hearing on October 29th, 1947, he became hostile with HUAC due to committee's rejection of his statement reading. Lawson made the statement, " you have spent one week vilifying me before the American public and you refused me to make a statement as an American citizen." Lawson made it clear that he wanted to stand up for the rights of not only himself but the American people. He protested against the unwillingness of the committee to have statements read when other witnesses were permitted to have their statements read to the committee. When questioned about his affiliation with the Screen Writers Guild, Lawson claimed he was a

member of the Screen Writers Guild but asserted that it was no business of the committee to probe his affiliation with the Writer's Guild as being pro communist. Throughout his hearing, Lawson was very disruptive and made it very clear that what the committee was doing was un-American and could ultimately affect all Americans. He wanted all Americans to take heed and challenge HUAC on their un-American tactics and undemocratic logic.

Lawson made the statement, " it is clear that you're threatening and intimidating the witness," he linked this to Hitler. Saying that the things HUAC had done incorporated tactics Hitler would have used during his reign of tyranny. As Lawson continued his testimony, he discussed movies he wrote for, such as Blockade, and how they were viewed as pro-American prior to the hearings. Lawson continued to counter attack the committee, discussing his claim that HUAC continually tried to expose the affiliations of anyone to get information about who and what was un-American or not. He concluded his hearing by claiming that HUAC would go to any measure to get answers, even if it meant destroying people's lives. The committee got very upset at Lawson's lack of respect for their investigation and was escorted by police while leaving his hearing.

Like Lawson, Hebert Biberman counterattacked HUAC during his hearing by claiming that HUAC was an un-American institution. He was an American screenwriter and film director and after his blacklisting, was forced to work independently. The result of his independent career was his film, The Salt of the Earth, which was deemed culturally significant by the United States Library of Congress and was stored in the National Film Registry. Biberman, during his testimony on October 29th, 1947, spoke about his heritage,

American patriotism, and his birthplace, Philadelphia, PA. He spoke intently about being born “ within a stone’s throw of Independence Hall”. He stated that he was born as an American citizen that inherited specific rights and freedoms. He voiced his opinion vehemently, claiming that HUAC was trying to destroy Hollywood and the American people as a whole. Biberman also said in his testimony that he felt that the committee’s main purpose was to cause discontent in Hollywood against him and his colleagues. While Biberman spoke, a shouting match erupted between himself and the committee. At that time, HUAC committee chairman Thomas Parnell, was portrayed as ferociously pounding his gavel repeatedly and shouting for order. To emphasize a factor, the term patriot was used to explain Biberman’s’ demeanor during the testimony, with Biberman using words such as “ I will not permit,” representing that he was there to defend the American public. Biberman’s testimony further outlined his point by focusing on that no matter what he said, “ He would be surprised if it would please the committee”.

Ring Lardner Jr. was another Hollywood Ten member whose rhetorical strategy fell into this category. He was educated at Phillips Academy, Andover, and Princeton University. Afterwards, he became a reporter for the New York Daily Mirror and later became a screenwriter. Lardner was cooperative during his October 30th, 1947 hearing, but made it clear that he did not want to assist the committee in smashing or dividing any particular guild in Hollywood. He viewed HUAC as an organization who controlled American public propaganda. Chairman Thomas suggested that he cooperate and “ not to do what others had done,” referring to not answering

their questions. The chairman made it apparent that if he didn't answer the questions appropriately, he wouldn't be able to read his statement to the committee. This verbal action was evident of "red-baiting." A definition of "red-baiting" would be to effectively obtain answers by goading an individual and persuading him to answer in a particular way. Unfortunately, Lardner did not follow their demands and questioned the committee about the intent of questions. The Chairman told him that "any real American would be proud to answer their questions". Lardner claimed t