Hollywood Under Siege: Impacts of the Second Red Scare on 20th-Century Creatives

Cici Liu[*], Elizabeth Manning[**]

[*] Polytechnic School
[**] The Fine Line

***Abstract*-** For many Americans, Sen. Eugene McCarthy and "McCarthyism" epitomize the anti-communist campaign of the mid-20th century. Four years before the Senate investigations of so-called "Red plots," however, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was given permanent status in the U.S. House of Representatives and began hearings that focused on producers, screenwriters, actors and other Hollywood artists. This paper brings the lesser-known actions of HUAC to light in their historical context, including earlier anti-communist movements and events of actual espionage. It then focuses on three individuals in Hollywood who unsuccessfully asserted the First Amendment did not require their cooperation when summoned before HUAC: Dalton Trumbo, John Howard Lawson, and Elia Kazan. The fate of each dissenter varied and is examined for those differences. Trumbo served a one-year prison sentence and was blacklisted from work, though ultimately "rehabilitated;" Lawson was also imprisoned, but never openly worked in Hollywood again; and Kazan reversed his initial stance and, while he escaped legal repercussions, was denounced by major figures in the industry as recently as 1999. The paper broadens our historical understanding of the 20th-century waves of anti-left and anti-communist campaigns, and points to how applying methodology of examining a period from individual points of view can deepen understanding and appreciation of significant events in history.

***Index Terms*-** anti-communist movements, Communism, House Un-American Activities Committee, Hollywood Ten, McCarthyism

1. Introduction

The Second World War had firmly established the United States as a global superpower, but at home, unsettling political tension and fear lay beneath its burgeoning confidence. The mid-century era of the Second Red Scare, characterized by anti-communist alarm and action against so-called "subversives," lurked within their own borders like a shadow, drastically shaping American society during the twentieth century. The persecution extended to every corner of American society, existing both at the highest levels of government and manifesting through instances like loyalty oaths being imposed on federal employees and the oppression of educators accused of leftist sympathies. Arguably, the most defining figure of the anti-communist movement was Senator Eugene McCarthy of Wisconsin; fewer know that the Second Red Scare began years before his fiery speech before the Women's Republican Club in 1950. The U.S. House of Representatives had established in 1945 the permanent House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which quickly took center stage in the investigation of domestic subversion.

With its investigations expanding, HUAC targeted a range of organizations, including the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which distressed the U.S. labor force due to the fast-paced expulsions of left-led unions (Fiske, 1950). Combined with their growing influence and high-profile hearings, the Committee received both support and criticism. However, among its members and supporters were not only mainstream anti-communist factions but also members of extremist groups; for example, HUAC Chairman Francis Walter and staff director Richard Arens faced scrutiny for their associations with individuals and groups that openly propagated white supremacist ideologies (trumanlibrary.gov, 2024). Serious questions began to emerge regarding the integrity of the Committee, its broader agenda, and the extent to which its anti-communist witch hunt intersected with the interests of those promoting ideological hate. Almost twenty years after the establishment of HUAC, President Harry S. Truman denounced the Committee as the "most un-American thing in the country" during his lecture at Columbia University on April 29th, 1959, pointing out it often undermined the very principles of liberty and equality it claimed to defend (Truman, 1959).

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

By then, the damage was done, however. When the Committee turned its attention to the film industry in the late 1940s, a move that drew widespread attention to its anti-communism efforts, Hollywood was more than just an entertainment hub; rather, its conglomeration of renowned actors, producers, and filmmakers created a powerful force that shaped public opinion and projected American values both domestically and abroad. As Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund articulated in their book, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community 1930-1960*, "Hollywood was only the tip of an iceberg, but it was a flashing neon tip that captivated the nation's attention" (Ceplair and England, 1983). For example, Hollywood films like *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), based on John Steinbeck's book, brought attention to the struggles of ordinary Americans during the Great Depression (Peiffer, 2024). Similarly, films like *Casablanca* (1942) played critical roles in boosting national morale and promoting patriotism through war bonds and public campaigns amidst World War II (Peiffer, 2024). HUAC recognized Hollywood's potential and sought not only to root out suspected communist sympathizers and their works but also to leverage Hollywood's cultural reach to legitimize their agenda and amplify anti-communist sentiment across the nation. Ultimately, government actions during the Second Red Scare stifled the creative freedom and outputs of Hollywood, leading to self-censorship; fed societal fears of communist subversives; and blighted the careers of blacklisted writers, actors, directors, and other industry professionals for decades to come.

2. The Roots of HUAC

Before HUAC investigations captured national headlines, the fear of internal domestic subversion had already begun to materialize. In 1945, classified U.S. government documents were discovered in the possession of the communist-aligned journal *Amerasia*, raising alarms regarding espionage and communist infiltration in American society (Heale, 1996). The following year, former Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered his "Iron Curtain" speech, urging strong American-British relations to counter the spread of communism and the growing influence of the Soviet Union (Tan and Wang, 2024). In 1948, accusations surfaced against former State Department official Alger Hiss, alleging he spied for the Soviets in the 1930s; he was jailed two years later for perjury (brittanica.com, 2024). China fell to communist forces under Chairman Mao's leadership in 1949. American anxieties over the global domino effect of communism reached new heights, ultimately concluding that this ideological threat was not confined solely to distant lands.

Individuals testifying before HUAC. Getty Images

Originally chaired by Martin Dies in 1938 as a temporary committee, HUAC examined the presence and influence of "un-American" propaganda. Its roots can be traced back to earlier government efforts in the early 20th century. For example, during the First Red Scare, the U.S. Senate's Overman Committee investigated the Germans and the Bolsheviks in America in the wake of World War I and the Russian Revolution. In 1945, HUAC transitioned from a temporary committee to a permanent standing committee within the House of Representatives through Public Law 601, marking the start of its communism-focused hunt (trumanlibrary.gov, 2024). The Committee continued its initial strategies of identifying and exposing individuals and organizations, but this time, its only target was those suspected of harboring communist sympathies, with investigations spanning private citizens, labor unions, educational institutions, and even cultural organizations (trumanlibrary.gov, 2024). As anti-communist fears intensified, HUAC became instrumental in shaping the domestic response to the perceived ideological threat posed by the Soviet Union.

In 1947, HUAC officially launched its investigations in Hollywood, beginning with a series of high-profile hearings. Forty-one individuals in the industry were called to testify about their affiliations and the alleged presence of communists. Ultimately, HUAC categorized the witnesses into two groups: "friendly" witnesses, who cooperated with the Committee and typically affirmed its suspicions, and "unfriendly" witnesses, who refused to provide information or name names. Among the "friendly" witnesses was Walt Disney, who claimed that communists were behind a labor strike at his studio in 1941, telling HUAC members that "a Communist group [was] trying to take over my artists" (Disney, 1947). He went further, implicating individuals like Herbert Sorrell, whom he

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

accused of using “Commie front organizations” to smear his reputation during the strike. Aside from Disney, big studio executives like Jack Warner from Warner Brothers also complied with the Committee's questions (Warner, 1947).

3. The Hollywood Ten

In contrast, among the “unfriendly” witnesses were ten writers and directors who took a stand by refusing to answer any of the Committee's suspicions about their political beliefs. Later known as the infamous “Hollywood Ten,” this group’s refusal to answer questions posed by HUAC resulted in their being cited for contempt of Congress. On November 24th, 1947, the House of Representatives upheld these charges; subsequently, following their convictions, the ten individuals were blacklisted by their studios and sentenced to jail.

Dalton Trumbo, a screenwriter, was one of the most outspoken members of the Hollywood Ten. Born in 1905 in Grand Junction, Colorado, Trumbo grew up in a family of modest means. He began his writing career in his adolescent years as a junior reporter for a local newspaper. Later, during his time as a college student at the University of Colorado, he worked as a local reporter as well as contributing to various publications on campus. His father’s job loss led to the family moving to Los Angeles, and Orus Bonham Trumbo’s eventual death in 1926 forced the young Trumbo into the role of provider for his mother and younger siblings. He worked in a bakery under grueling conditions for nearly a decade, yet he remained determined to establish himself as a writer. In 1935, a small English publisher finally published Trumbo’s novel after he had been rejected numerous times for penning several novels, short stories, and articles. Trumbo’s screenwriting career slowly began to burgeon as he subsequently won an American Booksellers Association Award for his moving antiwar novel *Johnny Got His Gun* in 1939. One year later, he would receive his first Oscar nomination for his adapted screenplay of Christopher Morley's best-selling 1939 novel, *Kitty Foyle*. Trumbo soon ranked among the highest-paid screenwriters in the industry (Witherbee, 2006).

Though Dalton Trumbo had joined the Communist Party beginning in 1943, his commitment to its ideology appears far from dogmatic. He aligned with the Party largely for its antifascist stance, according to his son. As Christopher Trumbo reflected in his biography of his father, *Dalton Trumbo: Blacklisted Hollywood Radical*, Dalton Trumbo “never had a great identification with Mother Russia, and he always had differences with fellow leftists, because... he didn't like the totalitarian ways in which they thought. He was always … open to argument and unbound by ideology" (Cohen, 2015). During his Party membership, Hollywood did not interfere with his political stance – the Soviet Union was technically an ally in 1943, after all, and Trumbo continued to bring profit to the industry with his screenplays (Cohen, 2025). In 1947, HUAC changed that.

Along with the rest of the Hollywood Ten, Trumbo was called before HUAC on October 28th, 1947. Prior to the testimony, he carefully prepared his defense, as shown by his personal archives (Palmer, 2005). He drafted multiple versions of his opening statement, attempting to make it as compelling as possible and created an extensive list of hypothetical questions the Committee might ask, along with detailed responses (Palmer, 2005). In his statement, he asserted that the Committee’s actions were a direct attack on the constitutional right of free expression:

> The committee in its hearings has clearly and consistently attacked the constitutional guarantee of a free press, which is a principal bulwark of those freedoms which the committee professes to respect. Motion pictures are a medium of communication, and as such are completely beyond the investigational powers of this committee. No committee of the congress can dictate what kind of films the motion picture industry shall make. Not to the public what kind of films it may be permitted (Trumbo, 1947).

Trumbo’s argument about the constitutional guarantee of a free press and the motion picture industry being beyond HUAC’s investigative powers directly references the First Amendment freedoms of speech, press, and expression, all of which he proclaimed were under attack by the committee’s actions. Furthermore, Trumbo’s precarious position framed HUAC’s investigation as not only a political witch hunt but also a fundamental violation of the constitutional protections guaranteed to all Americans. His meticulous preparation was all for nothing. Once in the courtroom, he was denied the chance to read his statement during the hearing (Palmer, 2005). In a strategic effort to defend his work, Trumbo even submitted copies of his past Hollywood screenplays to demonstrate that they were not intended for propaganda purposes. HUAC Chairman J. Parnell Thomas abruptly dismissed the evidence, stating that there were “too many pages” to review” (Palmer, 2005).

To keep the integrity of following the Constitution, Trumbo also asserted his rights under the Sixth Amendment. At the hearing, Trumbo, along with the other suspected creatives, was asked the now infamous question by the HUAC, “Are you now, or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?” In response, he asserted, “I believe I have the right to be confronted with any evidence which supports this question. I should like to see what you have” (Trumbo, 1947). By invoking his right to be confronted with evidence against him, Dalton Trumbo effectively framed the HUAC’s proceedings as a violation of due process guaranteed under the Sixth Amendment. The lack of evidence also alluded to the intrusive nature of the investigation against the “unfriendly” witnesses, where accusations were often based on suspicion or political bias rather than factual information. Overall, Trumbo’s invocation of his rights exposed HUAC’s disregard for constitutional principles, further juxtaposing the democratic values that they claimed to defend for the United States.

As a result of the hearing, Dalton Trumbo was imprisoned in June 1950 in Ashland, Kentucky, for one year on the charge of contempt of Congress. After his release, he emerged to find his professional career irrevocably altered. Trumbo’s conviction simultaneously earned him a place on Hollywood’s blacklist, which barred individuals whom the industry could or would no longer

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

employ. To continue his living, Trumbo had no choice but to write under fictional identities or to credit others, concealing his authorship in a calculated effort to bypass the blacklist (Witherbee, 2006). In a 1973 interview with the BBC, he candidly reflected on the professional and financial ramifications of his blacklisting: "The persons who were in a position to gamble for my services… were doing less expensive pictures, and hence I earned much less money" (McKevitt, 2024). For example, in 1953, Trumbo wrote the screenplay of the highly rated classic *Roman Holiday*, starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck, using his friend Ian Hunter's name (McKevitt, 2024). He also wrote *The Brave One* in 1956, a film that went on to win an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay the following year. However, the award was credited to the fictitious Robert Rich, a Trumbo pseudonym. His situation illustrates how the climate of political repression under HUAC extended beyond overt censorship: Artists were pressured to silence or obscure their own presence in the cultural sphere, a distinct form of self-censorship. It wasn't until nearly twenty years later, in 1975, that Trumbo was officially acknowledged with the award for being the writer of *The Brave One*, even though he and the studio confirmed that the film was his work in 1959 (Witherbee, 2006).

Trumbo's struggles during and after the HUAC hearings further demonstrated the oppressive atmosphere overwhelmed by fears present in the Second Red Scare era, as reflected in his inability to defend himself against accusations and the Committee's dismissal of constitutional rights. His imprisonment, blacklisting, and subsequent reliance on pseudonyms evince the constraints and limitations imposed on creative professionals whose livelihoods were jeopardized not for the content of their work, but for their perceived political stance.

The Hollywood Ten gather with their attorneys in front of U.S. District Court after being charged with contempt of Congress. In the second row, left side, are two artists examined in this article: Dalton Trumbo and John Howard Lawson. Wikimedia Commons

4. Blacklisted for Life

Another of the Hollywood Ten who was left off screen credits – for writing the screenplay of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, considered one of the greatest South African novels, for example – remained blacklisted for the rest of his life. A co-founder and first president of the Screen Writers Guild, John Howard Lawson was unrepentant and even enjoyed his "unrehabilitated" reputation. In his 1977 obituary in the *New York Times*, writer C. Gerald Fraser quoted him as saying: "I'm much more completely blacklisted than the others. I'm much more notorious and I'm very proud of that" (Fraser, 1977).

Lawson was born in 1894, in New York City, to wealthy Jewish parents who had changed their last name from Levy to Lawson to avoid the discrimination that often blocked Jews from joining social clubs and even staying at upper-class hotels like resorts. He was named for John Howard, an 18th- century English philanthropist known for his work to reform prison conditions and public health.

Despite his father's efforts to assimilate, which also included joining a Christian church, Lawson's memories of antisemitic encounters could well have been formative in his firm stand against HUAC. At Williams College, for example, he was a regular contributor to the literary magazine *The Williams College Monthly*, but lost an election to its board because some students expressed concerns that he was a Jew.

While at Williams, Lawson purchased the English translation of the 1892 book *The Class Struggle*, by influential Marxist author Karl Kautsky. The book postulates how capitalism leads to the concentration of wealth into the hands of a few; and as middle and lower classes are increasingly left behind, social revolution is inevitable. Though Lawson regularly flitted among the affluent class of his upbringing in the decade following his graduation in 1914, *The Class Struggle* and similar works became the roots of his socialist views (Horne, 2006).

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

Another early influence on his leftward shift was his stint as an ambulance driver in World War I in France, and subsequently as a part of the so-called Lost Generation: "For all of us," he wrote, "the experience of war brought us face to face with the breakdown of the values which had been taught to regard as the stable and permanent foundations of our society" (Horne, 2006).

Several of his early, expressionistic plays opened in New York, to mixed reviews, and in the late 1920s Lawson moved to Hollywood to join the screenwriting industry that burgeoned as "talkies" took over from silent movies. He turned a play he wrote the year before into a 1934 movie entitled *Success at Any Price*, with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. in the leading role of an ambitious, amoral man who ultimately discovers that financial success cannot bring happiness.

The same year he served as the Screen Writers Guild's first president, a union he co-founded. Lobbying for its recognition was his introduction to power politics in Washington, and what he later claimed first brought him to the attention of lawmakers (Fraser, 1977).

However, arguably more determinative was his decision to join the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) also that year, 1934. Seeking to offset his upper-middle-class roots, he traveled to poor areas in the South to support workers who were trying to unionize but facing staunch resistance. Politically-themed screenplays from this decade and World War II include *Marching Song* (not to be confused with the Orson Welles and Roger Hill play of the same name) about a sit-down strike.

Lawson testified before HUAC in October 1947. He was prohibited from reading his opening statement after the committee's chairman, New Jersey Republican J. Parnell Thomas, reviewed its first sentence (according to Thomas's subsequent comment): "For a week, the Committee has conducted an illegal and indecent trial of American citizens, whom the Committee has selected to be publicly pilloried and smeared" (Bentley, 1971).

Lawson's statement, recorded only in the Congressional Record, goes on to say, "I feel like a man who has had truckloads of filth heaped upon him; I am now asked to struggle to my feet and talk while more truckloads pour more filth around my head. …

> I never make a contract to write a picture unless I am convinced that it serves democracy and the interests of the American people. I will never permit what I write and think to be subject to the orders of self-appointed dictators, ambitious politicians, thought-control gestapos, or any other form of censorship this Un-American Committee may attempt to devise. My freedom to speak and write is not for sale in return for a card signed by J. Parnell Thomas saying 'O.K. for employment until further notice.' Pictures written by me have been seen and approved by millions of Americans. A subpoena for me is a subpoena for all those who have enjoyed these pictures and recognized them as an honest portrayal of our American life (Bentley, 1971).

A contentious exchange between members of HUAC and Lawson ended with the Committee ordering Lawson from the stand. Like the rest of the Hollywood Ten, Lawson argued that his right to refuse to cooperate with the Committee was protected by the First Amendment. However, the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld their conviction of contempt of Congress, and Lawson began a 12-month prison sentence in 1950.

The Academy-Award-nominated playwright never wrote openly for Hollywood again. As noted above, he did write the screenplay for the 1951 production of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, but otherwise earned a living via writing books and lecturing. His 1960 edition of *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting* remains influential in the industry, as does his book *Film in the Battle of Ideas: Masses and Mainstream*, released in 1953. Among his teaching credits are Stanford and Loyola Marymount University. "The rulers of the United States take film very seriously as an instrument of propaganda," he wrote in *Film in the Battle of Ideas*, noting that "workers appear on the screen only in subordinate or comic roles" (Lawson, 1953).

While Lawson's books and teaching have bestowed an alternative legacy, for many other creative individuals, the consequences of the Red Scare during the 1900s left their careers irreparably scarred. Many working in the industry saw the detrimental outcomes of those who spoke out against government orders – with examples of the financial impediments of alleged subversive filmmakers and the bleak career trajectory of those who were blacklisted – resulting in the creation of an atmosphere where conformity seemed like the only viable survival strategy.

5. Almost the Hollywood Eleven

Artists like screenwriter Elia Kazan found themselves in the agonizing position of having to choose between preserving their careers or facing oppression.

Born in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1909, Elia Kazan immigrated to the United States at age four with his family from Greece, settling in New York City. After graduating from Williams College in 1930, he subsequently studied at the Yale School of Drama, where he developed a passion for theater and the arts. Kazan's career began as an actor with the Group Theatre, a collective of filmmakers focused on realistic and leftist politically charged productions. It was during this period that he joined the Communist Party, where its Marxist ideology particularly drew him. However, Kazan soon became disillusioned with the Party, and he left his affiliations behind after refusing to engage in a political strike in 1936 (Lahr, 2010). Though short-lived, this membership would later make him a target during the HUAC investigations in the late 1940s.

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

Elia Kazan, c. 1950. Wikimedia Commons

By January 1952, Kazan was already a star director, with Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* on Broadway and, within a few more years, the breakout *Streetcar Named Desire* among his credits. His prominence meant he was among the group of nineteen Hollywood figures who first received summons from HUAC, and in Hollywood was the common hope it would also mean he could influence the Committee to stop its pursuit of industry artists. As in other HUAC hearings, the defendant was asked about his political standpoint and to name names of other individuals who were allegedly affiliated with subversive activities. In the courtroom, Kazan pledged to cooperate fully in discussing his own involvement with the Communist Party but declined further explanation to implicate others at the time. However, by April, he reversed the latter position by naming eight members associated with Group Theatre in a subsequent public hearing before the Committee, asserting that his compliance aligned with his understanding of civic duty and anti-Communist goals (DiAngelo, 2002).

Kazan told American playwright Arthur Miller that much thought underpinned his about-face; he reasoned that withholding names served little purpose, as many of the individuals had already been or would soon be implicated by others (Kazan, 1952). Kazan expressed the futility of resisting a system that seemed unstoppable, thus showing the broader anxious environment of the period, where fear permeated every decision. Moreover, Miller noted in his memoir *Timebends*,

> There was a certain gloomy logic in what [Kazan] was saying. Unless he came clean he could never hope . . . to make another film in America, and he would probably not be given a passport to work abroad either. . . . He had been told in so many words by his old boss and friend Spyros Skouras, president of Twentieth Century Fox, that the company would not employ him unless he satisfied the Committee (Lahr, 2010).

Two days after his testimony before HUAC as a "friendly" witness, on April 12, 1952, Kazan put out a self-financed advertisement in *The New York Times* attempting to justify his actions and solidify his anti-communist stance (DiAngelo, 2002). He articulated in his advertisement that communist activities in the United States posed an "unprecedented and exceptionally tough problem," suggesting the necessity of "hard and exact facts" to combat hysteria and protect the people "from a dangerous and alien conspiracy and still keep the free, open, healthy ways of life that give [them] self-respect" (Kazan, 1952). In many ways, Kazan's appeal ironically reinforced the very hysteria he claimed to address.

Two years later, after his testimony before HUAC, Elia Kazan directed *On The Waterfront* (1954), a film widely interpreted as a further defense, with hints of attempting to channel sympathy for himself and the Committee through various metaphors and analogies throughout the film. The character of Terry Malloy, portrayed as a reluctant activist who exposes union corruption and roots out impurity, serves as a stand-in for Kazan himself Shaman, 2003). In constructing a character like this, he frames his actions as heroic and morally justified, drawing connections to his own hearing, further positioning his decision as an act of bravery rather than betrayal. Similarly, the Waterfront Crime Commission in the film mirrors HUAC's mission of uncovering infiltration and its supposed role in enforcing moral righteousness and protecting democracy. The characters within the Mob were characterized as inherently evil, suggesting an analogy for every single individual with alleged ties to the Communist Party being a destructive threat to society. Reflecting on his motives years later, Kazan admitted in his 1988 autobiography that *On The Waterfront* was deeply personal, confirming the public's suspicion of the overlapping parallels: "That was me saying, with identical heat, that I was glad I'd testified as

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

I had. … On the Waterfront was my own story; every day I worked on that film, I was telling the world where I stood and my critics to go [expletive] themselves" (Shaman, 2003).

The candid confession of Kazan's justification for his actions through characters that took inspiration from his experiences further taps into the widespread anxiety over subversion, which drove individuals like him to extreme measures of self-preservation. That instinct for preservation and additional justification, however, was also accompanied by an element of self-censorship. While his self-financed public statement aimed to defend his turnabout, the film went further, presenting a dramatized account that would play well to contemporary expectations and justify his cooperation.

The controversy of Elia Kazan resurfaced in 1999 when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him an honorary Oscar for his lifetime contributions to film. The award sparked rekindled resentment over his legacy, specifically from his role in the HUAC hearings. Protesters gathered outside of the venue, holding signs denouncing his about-face decision to name names. (DiAngelo, 2002). Inside the venue, some 80 percent of attendees chose not to rise for the ceremony's traditional standing ovation, including Ed Harris, Amy Madigan, and Nick Nolte, according to *Variety* reporter Amy Archerd. Even those who clapped, like Steven Spielberg and Kate Capshaw, opted to remain seated (Acherd, 1999). Ironically, Kazan's decision to avoid being blacklisted led to a different kind of blacklisting: for many, his betrayal in the pursuit of personal gain fifty years ago offset his career achievements.

6. Conclusion

What individuals faced in the entertainment industry, particularly through examples of Dalton Trumbo, John Howard Lawson, and Elia Kazan, substantiates the destructive nature and the irreversible ramifications of the widespread fears of communism. Trumbo's and Lawson's blacklisting and the deprivation of job opportunities during the Red Scare era symbolize the bleak trajectory of those who speak up against accusations; being a member of the Communist Party was not even a crime in the United States. Furthermore, Kazan's decision to exercise betrayal against his fellow artists earned him a spot in the despised, as conforming to the abuser makes him part of the cause of pain in this period.

HUAC's targeting of Hollywood reflected a broader climate of unspoken fear lingering in the atmosphere that fueled suspicion, as seen in suspecting alleged Communists without substantial evidence. Therefore, though there exist creatives from different positions within the filmmaking world, their overall careers, reputations, and freedoms were sacrificed in the government's act of repression, thus fundamentally altering Hollywood as a creativity hub for the country. Ultimately, HUAC's actions serve as a cautionary example of how governmental structures, under the guise of national security, can undermine the very democratic values they claim to protect.

In the 1960s, the waning influence of anti-Communist movements marked a gradual retreat from the Red Scare, with the production of more open and liberal films that challenged the harsh norms of the 1950s. Yet the legacy and impact of the era still persist, particularly in today's discourse on the toxicity of public condemnation and cancel culture. Just as the culture of fear during the 1940s and 1950s contributed to the change in the overall creative outputs of Hollywood, cancel culture has led to questions about the sustainability of open discourse and the frequent occurrence of suppression of controversial ideas, specifically on social media. Reflecting on the detrimental impacts of restricting voices during Red Hollywood, it is imperative to critically examine the balance between protecting communal values and upholding the fundamental rights that underpin a just society.

References

Archerd, Army. "Kazan Award Among Show's Lowlights." *Variety*, March 21, 1999. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://variety.com/1999/voices/columns/kazan-award-among-show-s-lowlights-1117492548/.

Authentic History. "Dalton Trumbo HUAC Testimony Excerpt, 1947." Video. YouTube, November 22, 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFR4RIyekis.

Bentley, Eric, ed. *Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts from Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938–1968*, pp. 161-165. (New York: Viking Press, 1971).

British Broadcasting Corporation. "1952: US Immigration Slams Door on Chaplin." *BBC*, September 19, 1952. Accessed December 6, 2024. http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/19/newsid_3102000/3102179.stm.

Ceplair, Larry, and Steven Englund. *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community 1930-1960*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983. Accessed December 5, 2024. https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_HvC3WaGZF3UC/mode/2up.

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

Cohen, Ronald D. "A Dark Page in American History: Dalton Trumbo and the Hollywood Blacklist." *American Communist History* 14, no. 2 (2015): 205-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/14743892.2015.1081476.

DiAngelo, Linda M. "Elia Kazan Controversy: Past, Present and Future." Master's thesis, Rowan University, 2002. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1425.

Editors of Encyclopaedia, ed. "Alger Hiss." *Britannica Online*. Last modified November 2024. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alger-Hiss.

Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. "'HUAC Fronts Hate Groups', March 1960." In *Mary Ann Smith Wilson, Ruby Doris Smith Robinson Collection on Student Activism*. Washington (D.C.): Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, n.d. Previously published in *The Gazette and Daily*, March 9, 1960. Accessed December 5, 2024. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/auc.078:0361.

Fiske, Mel. "McCarthyism Takes over the U.S. Labor Movement." In *People's World 100th Anniversary Series*. People's World, 2024. Previously published as "CIO Right Wing Expels Mine-Mill, UOPWA." *Daily Worker*, February 1950. Accessed December 5, 2024. https://peoplesworld.org/article/mccarthyism-takes-over-the-u-s-labor-movement/.

Fraser, C. Gerald. “John Howard Lawson, 82, Writer Blacklisted by Hollywood in ’47.” https://www.nytimes.com/1977/08/14/archives/john-howard-lawson-82-writer-blacklisted-by-hollywood-in-47.html

The Great Dictator. Directed by Charlie Chaplin. United Artists, 1940.

Harold L. Erickson, Michael Barson. "Charlie Chaplin." *History Reference Source*. Last modified February 21, 2024. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=002cef05-43c3-3f48-973d-b715624c51ea.

Heale, M. J. "The Amerasia Spy Case: Prelude to McCarthyism / Not without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism / Red Scare or Red Menace? American Communism and Anticommunism in the Cold War Era." *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (1996): 1080-82. ProQuest Central Student (224913623; 03200033).

"The Hollywood Ten." In *American Decades*, edited by Judith S. Baughman, Victor Bondi, Richard Layman, Tandy McConnell, and Vincent Tompkins, 301-03. Vol. 6. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2001. Gale in Context: U.S. History.

Horne, Gerald. *The Final Victim of the Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten*. (https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnrw4) Oakland, CA, 2006; online edition, California Scholarship Online, 22 Mar. 2012)

"House Un-American Activities Committee." In *Gale U.S. History Online Collection*. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2022. Gale in Context: U.S. History.

"Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States by United States. Congress. House. Special Committee on Un-American Activities (1938-1944)." The Online Books Page, University of Pennsylvania. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/metabook?id=diescommittee.

Kazan, Elia, dir. *On the Waterfront*. Columbia Pictures, 1954.

Kazan Elia. "A Statement." Advertisement. *The New York Times*, April 12, 1952. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1952/04/12/issue.html.

Lahr, John. "Method Man." *The New Yorker*, December/January 2010. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/13/elia-kazan-method-man-john-lahr.

Lawson, John Howard. *Film in the Battle of Ideas*. New York: Masses & Mainstream, Borgo Press, 1953.

Matgamna, Sean. "The Politics of Casablanca." Workers' Liberty. Last modified December 13, 2018. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://www.workersliberty.org/story/2018-12-12/politics-casablanca.

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710

McKevitt, Greg. "'I Went Spectacularly Broke': The Blacklisted Hollywood Writer Who Won Two Oscars." BBC. Last modified June 17, 2024. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20240613-i-went-spectacularly-broke-the-blacklisted-hollywood-writer-who-won-two-oscars.

"Old Hollywood Actors Who Were Blacklisted for Ties to Communism." Video. YouTube. Posted by Facts Verse, October 27, 2021. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEO-JZBsxi8&t=451s.

Palmer, Tim. "Side of the Angels: Dalton Trumbo, the Hollywood Trade Press, and the Blacklist." *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 4 (2005): 57-74. JSTOR.

Petersen, Jennifer B. "Charlie Chaplin." *History Reference Source*. Last modified August 1, 2017. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=4f4279a6-600d-3bb7-baa2-ca71d206e538.

Pfeiffer, L.. "The Grapes of Wrath." Encyclopedia Britannica, October 10, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Grapes-of-Wrath-film-1940.

Sbardellati, John, and Tony Shaw. "Booting a Tramp: Charlie Chaplin, the FBI, and the Construction of the Subversive Image in Red Scare America." *Pacific Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (2003): 495-530. https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2003.72.4.495.

Shaman, Jeffrey M., "On the Waterfront: Cheese-Eating, Huac, and the First Amendment" (2003). *Constitutional Commentary*. 476. https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/concomm/476

Tan, Hui Ren, and Tianyi Wang. "McCarthyism, Media, and Political Repression: Evidence from Hollywood." Working paper, National University of Singapore, July 2024. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://doi.org/10.3386/w32682.

Truman, Harry S. "Harry S. Truman Lecture at Columbia University on the Witch-Hunting and Hysteria." Lecture presented at Columbia University, New York, NY, April 29, 1959. Harry S. Truman National Library and Museum. Accessed December 5, 2024. https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/soundrecording-records/sr75-3-harry-s-truman-lecture-columbia-university-witch-hunting-and-hysteria.

Truman Presidential Museum and Library. "Background Essay: House Un-American Activities Committee." Editorial. Truman Presidential Museum and Library. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/HUAC_Handouts.pdf.

Trumbo, Dalton. Letter, "Trumbo Statement," n.d. In *HUAC Hearings*, by Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d. Accessed December 6, 2024. https://wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/TrumboB43F8005.pdf.

Warner, Jack L. "Testimony of Jack L. Warner." Interview. History Matters. https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6442.

Witherbee, Amy. "Dalton Trumbo." *History Reference Source*. Last modified January 1, 2006. https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=9f42ea8a-4d1f-3182-b033-4c6359e5b7ab.

AUTHORS

First Author – Cici Liu, AP History student, Polytechnic School, Pasadena CA
Second Author – Elizabeth Manning, The Fine Line, Washington, D.C., history and editing consultant

Reviewer:
Kanimkul Tadzhiev
PhD, Associate Professor
Gulistan State University (Uzbekistan)

10.29322/IJSRP.15.11.2025.p16710