BLACKLIST
THE HOLLYWOOD RED SCARE
OCTOBER 12 – FEBRUARY 10

Jewish museum
MILWAUKEE

PRESENTED BY:
Joel & Caran Quadracci
The Windhover Foundation

SPONSORS:
Brico Fund
Marianne & Sheldon B. Lubars
An Anonymous Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation
INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBIT

In preparation for your upcoming visit to Jewish Museum Milwaukee’s Blacklist: The Hollywood Red Scare, we encourage you to utilize this curriculum guide with your students.

There are a few different themes that are studied throughout the exhibit. These include First Amendment freedoms and the importance of civil liberties, the historical and political climate during the Red Scare, the creation of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and Hollywood Blacklist, the process of getting on and off the Blacklist, film, and audience response.

Through your visit to the museum, along with the additional resources provided in this guide, we hope that your students will gain a better understanding of the topic, using the Wisconsin Social Studies Standards, including those for inquiry and critical thinking.

There are a variety of resources in this guide, including:

- Timeline of the HUAC hearings
- A video made for this exhibit, explaining the events that led up to those discussed in the exhibit
- Questions from the exhibit
- Vocabulary list with definitions

If your students have any questions about the exhibit, please record them and bring those with so they can be answered. If time, please have your students complete this survey (LINK), they will take it again at the end of their visit to compare their knowledge level.

Finally, part of the workshop will include roleplaying, and several students will be asked to read testimony from the HUAC Hearings. Please pre-select 6 students who would be willing to read in front of their classmates for each of the workshop groups.

We look forward to having you visit us!
Group Logistics

- Groups will be divided based on the number of people visiting; please have your group divided up before your visit. We appreciate it if the students have nametags with their first name on them. It works really well if you identify the group on the nametag so the kids can see that they are in group 1 or the orange group.
- Ideally your kids have their nametags before they get off the bus, so that we can jump into our schedule as soon as you arrive.
- Don’t worry about dividing the students up outside; we can do that inside.

Before You Visit:
The Museum would appreciate it if you would take some time to orient your students to this topic. We would appreciate if you watch the intro film to the exhibit before you visit. This 6-minute original film was created to explain how the blacklist happened and will provide your students with background for their Museum visit.

INTRO FILM: https://youtu.be/FRb5UwGt5-I

Here are some concepts that you might want to explain to them after watching:

- Labor Unions: an organized association of workers, often in a trade or profession, formed to protect and further their rights and interests. Although people began organizing unions in the late 1800s, the movement became stronger during the Great Depression, under the New Deal.
- Antitrust Status: relating to legislation preventing or controlling trusts or other monopolies, with the intention of promoting competition in business. In the film there is a short line about the film industry and its antitrust status. Before 1948, movie studios owned movie theaters controlled what theaters could show. The Supreme Court struck down this business operation in May 1948, forcing the big movie studios to sell their movie theaters.
- Subversive: seeking or intended to subvert an established system or institution. When HUAC convened hearings in 1947, the major focus was if Communist propaganda was being injected into Hollywood movies.
- Propaganda: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

The focus of the film is the fear that drives American politics. It would be a great conversation to talk about the role that fears play in current political debates.
QUESTIONS WITHIN THE EXHIBIT:
Each of the exhibit’s panels is connected with a question to help direct your students in thinking about the exhibit and creating contemporary questions. Here are the questions that they will encounter:

1. Intro Panel
   a. How should the government balance security and civil liberties?
   b. What parallels can be found between this time period and other points in American history?
   c. How do government policies and business interests intersect? What are the benefits and challenges of individuals?

2. Restricted Response
   a. Are there other ways in which people are treated differently under the law?

3. Guilty Until Proven Innocent
   a. Do Congressional hearings reveal the truth? Why or why not?

4. The Hollywood Ten on Trial
   a. Do you think the Hearings are an example of government overreach? Why or why not?

   a. Should political stances be a consideration for employment decisions? Are there any contemporary examples?

6. Hollywood Briefly Fights Back
   a. Does celebrity interest change the way we understand an issue?

7. Swearing Loyalty
   a. Are there any industries that require an oath of loyalty today?

8. Navigating the Blacklist
   a. Is it ever appropriate for a person to lose a job for his or her political beliefs?

9. The Clearance Machine
   a. What are the lines you would not cross to maintain employment?

10. Media and the Mob Mentality
    a. What role should the media play in reporting on government checks and balances? How should partisan issues play in the media?

11. Piercing the Blacklist
    a. Are there any parallels one can draw between the Hollywood Blacklist and contemporary issues? If so, what are they?

12. Credit Where Credit is Due
    a. Are there any parallels one can draw between the Hollywood Blacklist and contemporary issues? If so, what are they?

13. Subversion?
    a. Do you feel the following films were subversive? Why or why not?
    b. What was subversive about these films?
**Vocabulary List**

- **Red Scare:** Periods in which anti-Communist ideology is utilized to mobilize political action. These tactics were not new; they represented the continuum of action taken against those who held far left political views—some were Communists or Socialists, but others were not. Historian Larry Ceplair noted, “Red scares are combinations of anti-radicalism and nativism.”

- **House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC):** This Congressional Committee began as the Special Committee on Un-American Activities Authorized to Investigate Nazi Propaganda and Certain Other Propaganda Activities by two Northern representatives, including Jewish Congressman, Samuel Dickstein in 1938. The Committee changed into HUAC and the focus shifted from Fascist to Communist activity in the United States. In its early form, it was led by Representative Martin Dies (D-Texas) who asserted pressure on the film industry. The main area of interest was Communist infiltration into New Deal programs, specifically the Federal Theater Project. With the entry of the US into World War II, the Committee’s work was put on the backburner.

- **Blacklist:** Denying someone employment based on their political opinions. Blacklisting began as a weapon against trade unions in the 19th century.

- **Communism:** An economic and social system envisioned by the nineteenth-century German scholar Karl Marx. In theory, under communism, all means of production are owned in common, rather than by individuals. In practice, a single authoritarian party controls both the political and economic systems. This was true in the major Communist force of the Twentieth Century, the Soviet Union.

- **Communist Party-USA (CPUSA):** An active force in American politics for decades by the time the HUAC hearings start. Many people on the left join the Party during the Great Depression as a way of responding to crushing economic despair. Labor unions and guilds in Hollywood originated in this period to respond to wealth disparity and working conditions. Many Americans became disillusioned with the Party after the Soviet Union signed a nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939, including some blacklistees. CPUSA was connected to the Soviet Union through the Communist International (COMINTERN). Before and after World War II, there was significant anti-Communist political activity—unions, New Deal programs and the Communist party were viewed with suspicion.
• **American Legion:** Organization comprised of veterans that was organized after World War I. The group was especially active in the Hollywood Blacklist, threatening to boycott films with connections to suspected Communists. The Legion maintained and published their own records of Communists in Hollywood throughout the 1940s and 50s.

• **Fellow Traveler:** Someone who is sympathetic to the views of a political organization without being a member of that organization; this term was often used to identify people and organizations on the Left during the Red Scare and some who were labelled as a fellow traveler faced many of the same challenges as CPUSA members.

• **New Deal:** A group of government programs and policies established under President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s; the New Deal was designed to improve conditions for persons suffering in the Great Depression. Those opposed to the New Deal felt that it smacked of Communism based on the breadth and cost of public programs, and that some New Deal employees were Communist-sympathizers.

• **Red-baiting:** Political move to label someone as a Communist or Communist-sympathizer to discredit them. Richard Nixon famously created a pink flyer to smear his opponent Democratic Senator Helen Gahagan Douglas in the 1950 election for US Senate.

---

**BLACKLIST: THE HOLLYWOOD RED SCARE TIMELINE**

1938  House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) is formed by Congress to investigate Communist activity in the United States.

1944  A conservative group of Hollywood leaders forms the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. They decry communist sympathy among members of the film industry and call for a Congressional investigation.

1947  HUAC hearings are held in Los Angeles and Washington to investigate Communist activity in Hollywood. “Friendly witnesses” testify about communist activity they have witnessed; “unfriendly witnesses” are called to testify about their own Communist activities.

Ten unfriendly witnesses, known as the “Hollywood Ten,” refuse to testify. Cited for “contempt of Congress,” they are fined and sent to jail for one year.

Industry executives issue the “Waldorf Statement” censuring the Ten, refusing to hire them or anyone else with alleged Communist sympathies. The blacklist begins.

1947-51  Hollywood Professional guild membership requires all members to take an oath of loyalty to the US government.
Many prominent actors recant past leftist activities.

1950   Sen. Joseph McCarthy era begins with accusations of Communists working in State Department, continues for four years.

1951-1960s
   A second round of HUAC hearings, televised across the country, re-open the investigation into Communist activity in Hollywood. Many witnesses called admit past involvement with leftist causes and name others involved. Those who are named and those who refuse to testify are not able to be employed in the motion picture or television industries.

1960   Dalton Trumbo receives writing credits for his work on *Spartacus* and *Exodus*, ending the Blacklist for himself.

1997   The Writers’ Guild of America restores screenwriting credits on 67 films written by blacklisted screenwriters during the 1950s and 1960s.

**POSSIBLE ESSAYS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES**

1. Who is depicted as the enemy in media (movies, books, etc.) in different periods of history? Note how this affects those who are similar to those portrayed as “the enemy” (such as Asian people during WWII)?

2. In 1945, Albert Maltz wrote a short film that starred Frank Sinatra to oppose anti-Semitism in America. Sinatra plays himself and educates a group of boys who had been chasing a Jewish boy. You can watch the film here (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhPwtnGviyg). Then have a discussion about the following questions:
   - Why was the group chasing the boy? What do you think they were planning to do to him?
   - How did Frank Sinatra turn around the situation?
   - Why was this movie needed in 1945?
   - Are there parts of this movie that make you uncomfortable?
   - Have you ever experienced anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, or being labeled by someone because you were different?
   - Have you ever seen someone teased / picked on / excluded because they were different? How did you respond?
   - How could you intervene (instead of being a bystander) to help someone being picked on or excluded?
   - You could have the students script their response to a current issue—what modern day celebrity would they hire to express their views? Why should this person be the spokesperson for your movement?
3. Have your students create a debate on the role of Congressional Hearings. “A hearing is a meeting or session of a Senate, House, joint, or special committee of Congress, usually open to the public, to obtain information and opinions on proposed legislation, conduct an investigation, or evaluate/oversee the activities of a government department or the implementation of a Federal law. In addition, hearings may also be purely exploratory in nature, providing testimony and data about topics of current interest.” Is this an effective way for government leaders to obtain information?

4. The Newseum has great resources that connect with First Amendment freedoms, primary sources, and explorations of propaganda. Here are some activities that JMM feels connect with *Blacklist: The Hollywood Red Scare*.
   a. Propaganda Through History: Analyzing Historical Sources
      (https://newseumed.org/activity/propaganda-through-history-analyzing-historical-sources-mlbp-aca/)
   b. Introduction to the First Amendment: What’s a Violation?
      (https://newseumed.org/activity/introduction-to-the-first-amendment-whats-a-violation/)
**Books:**

This book uses the case study of the classic western *High Noon* to explore the experience of being blacklisted. “The Process” (Chapter 16) in the book does an excellent job of illuminating the process of being added or removed from the Blacklist.


McGilligan and Buhle interviewed thirty-five blacklisted individuals for this compilation of oral histories. You can pick several of the interviewees to explore and get a sense of an individual’s response to the Blacklist.


Navasky’s book is an excellent exploration of the entire time period and details the political challenges. In particular, the chapter on “Guilty Bystanders” highlights the varied people and groups that enabled the Blacklist.

**Web-based Resources**

**The Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research** ([https://wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu/](https://wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu/))

The Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research (WCFTR) in Madison is one of the world’s major archives of research materials relating to the entertainment industry and the Blacklist. It maintains over three hundred collections from outstanding playwrights, television and motion picture writers, producers, actors, designers, directors, and production companies. Materials preserved include: historical records and personal papers, twenty thousand motion pictures, television shows, and videotapes; two million still photographs and promotional graphics; and several thousand sound recordings. It is richest in records of the American film industry between 1930 and 1960, American popular theater in the 1940s and 1950s, and American television from the 1940s to the 1970s. WCFTR has online exhibits related to Dalton Trumbo, the Hollywood Blacklist Papers, and Kirk Douglas’ papers.

**Spartacus Educational** ([http://spartacus-educational.com/USAhollywood10.htm](http://spartacus-educational.com/USAhollywood10.htm))

This website is based in Britain and has entries related to many Blacklist topics. They link each entry to primary sources.

**You Must Remember This** ([http://www.youmustrememberthispodcast.com/episodes/2016/1/20/blacklist-prehistory](http://www.youmustrememberthispodcast.com/episodes/2016/1/20/blacklist-prehistory))

Podcast producer, Katrina Longworth, devotes sixteen episodes of her podcast to exploring the Blacklist. For those who want to dive deep, these are excellent, well-researched podcasts that detail diverse stories through the Blacklist period.

**The Day the Cold War Came Home** ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ-DwnHlgic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ-DwnHlgic))

NPR producer Tony Kahn directed this short film to describe his experience as a child growing up with a blacklisted father. *Note, there is a short section where Kahn’s father writes a story for Playboy and shows a suggestive image of a woman at the 12:20 mark.*