

Three Blacklisted Writers Receive Credit for Screenplays

Writers Guild of America Announces Screen Credit To Writers Bernard Gordon, Abraham Polonsky and Michael Wilson

The Board of Directors of the Writers Guild of America, west has unanimously voted to officially correct the writing credits of three films written or co-written by American writers who were blacklisted during the so-called "McCarthy Era" (1947-1960s). ([See related story.](#)) Those films and the correct credits are:

Friendly Persuasion
Screenplay by Michael Wilson
Based on the Novel by Jessamyn West
(1956 Allied Artists)

Odds Against Tomorrow
Screenplay by Abraham Polonsky and Nelson Gidding
Based on the Novel by William P. McGivern

The Day of the Triffids
Screenplay by Bernard Gordon
Based on the Novel by John Wyndham
(1963 Allied Artists)

The guild has officially notified the companies of the change requesting that future prints, video cassettes or other distribution reflect the correct writing credit.

"It is with great personal pleasure and a sense of gratitude to these writers that I announce this change on behalf of the guild," said Brad Radnitz, President, Writers Guild of America, west. "These writers were denied a fundamental right of authorship--the right to credit for their work. Some of these writers were able to see their work produced by using fronts, too many were denied the right to work in our country at all.

"The effects of the blacklist were not just limited to Hollywood, it was

our country that was denied the truth and the artistic expression of a generation of writers. Their voices in our culture were lost forever.

"There are those who feel that the wrongs of 50 years ago should be left in the past. We disagree. History deserves the truth and these men and women deserve the credit for their work and the right to see a wrong acknowledged."

The "McCarthy Era" began in 1947 with a speech by Senator Joe McCarthy at Wheeling, W. Virginia in which he accused state department officials of being communists. It soon spread to Hollywood with the now infamous House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings that called writers, directors, actors, producers and agents before the committee to testify as to whether they were communists. Individuals found themselves on the "blacklist" for refusing to testify or because they had attended political meetings or due to the testimony of others regarding their political beliefs. The communist scare of that era destroyed the careers and lives of numerous Americans working in government, the teaching profession, artists, unions and others. Although some of the many writers that were blacklisted were able to continue to work utilizing "fronts" many writers left the country to protect their families from the effects of the blacklist.

The Writers Guild initiated a program in 1968 to begin to correct the numerous credits on films and television of that era that carry incorrect credits. The guild has recently appointed a new committee to review credits of that time and recommend corrections. The committee is comprised of George Kirgo and Del Reisman, both former Presidents of the guild and Paul Jarrico, himself a blacklisted writer and producer.

Friendly Persuasion--Current prints of the film appear with no screenwriting credit, although the guild determined at the time that Michael Wilson should receive sole screenplay credit. The company, Allied Artists, invoked a clause of the 1955 Writers Guild contract with the companies that allowed for the company to be relieved of its obligations under certain conditions related to the blacklist.

Odds Against Tomorrow--Originally the credit was given to John O. Killens and Nelson Gidding. Mr. Killens acted as a front for Abraham Polonsky. The guild was able to verify this information from

correspondence and statements made by individuals associated with the film.

Mr. Polonsky will appear at a retrospective of the work of John Garfield sponsored by the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York. Four of Polonsky's films will be shown during the retrospective including Odds Against Tomorrow which will screen August 11 at 8:00 p.m. Mr. Polonsky will attend for a Q & A following the screenings. For further information: On the east coast, call Joanna Ney at (212) 875-5625, or on the west coast, contact Michael Kaplan at (310) 823-4024.

The Day of the Triffids--The original credit on-screen was given to Philip Yordan. Mr. Yordan confirmed in writing that he acted as a front for Bernard Gordon, the blacklisted writer who has now been awarded sole screenplay credit for the film.

To date, the WGA has corrected the credits on the following films:

- The Bridge On the River Kwai--Screenplay by Carl Foreman and Michael Wilson, Based on the novel by Pierre Boulle.
- Broken Arrow--Screenplay by Albert Maltz, Based on the novel Blood Brother by Elliott Arnold.
- Roman Holiday--Screenplay by Ian McLellan Hunter and John Dighton, Story by Dalton Trumbo.
- The Brave One--Screenplay by Harry Franklin and Merrill G. White, Story by Dalton Trumbo.
- Deadly is the Female (Gun Crazy)--Screenplay by MacKinlay Kantor and Dalton Trumbo, Based on a Saturday Evening Post story Gun Crazy by MacKinlay Kantor.
- The Defiant Ones--Written by Nedrick Young and Harold Jacob Smith.
- Lawrence of Arabia--Screenplay by Robert Bolt and Michael Wilson, Based on the life and writings of Colonel T.E. Lawrence. ([See related story.](#))