

WGA News

HOLLYWOOD BLACKLIST TO RECEIVE LANDMARK COMMEMORATION BY INDUSTRY'S 4 TOP GUILDS

Evening Features Kathy Baker, James Cromwell, Billy Crystal, John Lithgow,
David Hyde Pierce, Jimmy Smits, Kevin Spacey and Alfre Woodard

LOS ANGELES (October 21, 1997) -- On Monday, October 27, the four major talent guilds will produce "Hollywood Remembers the Blacklist" to commemorate one of the nation's and the entertainment industry's darkest chapters. The night marks the 50th year since The Hollywood Ten were cited for contempt of Congress after refusing to reveal political affiliations to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which was investigating so-called Communist infiltration in the film industry. The event will be held at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences at 7:30 p.m.

The American Federation of Television and Radios Artists (AFTRA), Directors Guild of America (DGA), Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and Writers Guild of America, west (WGAW) have joined together for the event honoring members whose lives and careers were damaged, some irreparably, by McCarthy Red-scare tactics. The Blacklist commemoration will include film clips, commentary and dramatic recreations of HUAC hearings.

Actors scheduled to participate include Kathy Baker, James Cromwell, Billy Crystal, David Hyde Pierce, John Lithgow, Jimmy Smits, Kevin Spacey and Alfre Woodard.

In dramatic presentations, Kathy Baker will appear as actress Gale Sondergaard, winner of the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress -- the first one ever given -- for her performance in 1936's "Anthony Adverse," but whose prominence as Hollywood's top female character actress in such films as "The Life of Emile Zola" and "The Letter" ended abruptly when she was blacklisted.

James Cromwell, whose own father, director John Cromwell, was blacklisted, will portray HUAC general counsel Frank Tavenner, known for asking the famous question, "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?"

Billy Crystal will be featured as actor Larry Parks, whose dramatic rise to fame in 1940s films -- including "The Jolson Story," "Jolson Sings Again" and "Down to Earth" -- was cut short when he confessed to past membership in the Communist party.

David Hyde Pierce will play a SAG representative who refuses Gale Sondergaard's plea for help.

John Lithgow will appear as actor Sterling Hayden, known for his roles in "The Asphalt Jungle," "The Killing" and "Dr. Strangelove," who both confessed to prior membership in the Communist party and named colleagues as members.

Kevin Spacey will be writer Paul Jarrico, whose screenplays include "The Search," for which he shared an Academy Award for Best Screen Story, "Tom, Dick and Harry," "Las Vegas Story"

and "The White Tower," but whose World War II "Song of Russia" later received scathing criticism from the HUAC.

Jimmy Smits and Alfre Woodard are slated to narrate for the evening. Judy Chaikin, whose credits include the Emmy Award-nominated documentary "Legacy of the Hollywood Blacklist," will direct and executive produce the event, while Delbert Mann will direct cameras for a taped presentation to be aired at a later date.

Also performing will be David Andrews, Wayne Duvall, Steven Gilborn, Ken Jenkins, John Kapelos, Miles Neff, Katy Selverstone and Lise Simms.

In related events, at 10:00 a.m. on the morning of October 27 the First Amendment/Blacklist Project will hold a site dedication for acclaimed artist Jenny Holzer's new sculpture, a tribute to the project, as it is permanently installed at the USC Fisher Gallery. (Contact Nancy Lee Freed, (310) 476-1575.)

The Museum of Television and Radio is sponsoring a provocative program featuring a panel of well-known Hollywood writers whose lives and careers were affected by the Blacklist, with screenings from their works, on Monday, November 17, 7:00 p.m. (Information: (310) 786-1091.)

And the Los Angeles County Art Museum is holding a film series of narrative and documentary films, both famous and obscure, by blacklisted writers and directors, beginning November 21 and continuing into December. (Information: (213) 857-6110.)