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# The Other Blacklist The African American Literary And Cultural Left Of The 1950s

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Capitalist Nigger  
The Other Blacklist  
Memory of Kin  
Eric Walrond  
Race Capital?  
King and the Other America  
W.E.B. Du Bois  
Democracy in Africa  
Black-eyed Susans  
Modern American Drama: Playwriting in the 1950s  
Remaking Black Power  
Arise!  
Winning Our Freedoms Together  
F.B. Eyes  
Du Bois's Telegram  
Communists in Closets  
Negrophobia  
Let America Be America Again  
Alice Neel: People Come First  
Spirit in the Dark  
Telling America's Story to the World  
The Strange Career of Racial Liberalism  
Blacklist

The Other Side of Truth  
The Other Side of Terror  
Ruth Starr Rose (1887-1965)  
Charles White  
Left of the Color Line  
The Black Jacobins  
Paul Robeson  
Faith in Black Power  
The Black Cultural Front  
The Black Calhouns  
Creative Activism  
Dreaming the Present  
Stealing the Show  
The Other Blacklist  
The Broadcast 41  
The Bloomsbury Handbook to Cold War Literary Cultures  
The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists around the World

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## **MAHONEY JAZMIN**

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### **Capitalist Nigger** Springer Nature

Telling America's Story to the World argues that state and state-affiliated cultural diplomacy contributed to the making of postwar US literature. Highlighting the role of liberal internationalism in US cultural outreach, Harilaos Stecopoulos contends that the state mainly sent authors like Ralph Ellison, Robert Frost, William

Faulkner, Langston Hughes, and Maxine Hong Kingston overseas not just to demonstrate the achievements of US civilization but also to broadcast an American commitment to international cross-cultural connection. Those writers-cum-ambassadors may not have helped the state achieve its propaganda goals-indeed, this rarely proved the case-but they did find their assignments an opportunity to ponder the international meanings and possibilities of US literature. For many of those figures, courting foreign publics inspired a reevaluation of the scope and form of their own literary projects. Testifying to the inadvertent yet integral role of cultural diplomacy in the worlding of US letters,

works like *The Mansion* (1959), *Life Studies* (1959), "Cultural Exchange" (1961, 1967), *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989), and *Three Days Before the Shooting...* (2010) reimagine US literature in a mobile, global, and distinctly political register.  
The Other Blacklist Harvard University Press

Adopting a unique historical approach to its subject and with a particular focus on the institutions involved in the creation, dissemination, and reception of literature, this handbook surveys the way in which the Cold War shaped literature and literary production, and how literature affected the course of the Cold War. To do so, in addition to more 'traditional' sources it uses institutions like MFA programs, university literature departments, book-review sections of newspapers, publishing houses, non-governmental cultural agencies, libraries, and literary magazines as a way to understand works of the period differently. Broad in both their geographical range and the range of writers they cover, the book's essays examine works of mainstream American literary fiction from writers such as Roth, Updike and Faulkner, as well as moving beyond the U.S. and the U.K. to detail how writers and readers from countries including, but not limited to, Taiwan, Japan, Uganda, South Africa, India, Cuba, the USSR, and the Czech Republic engaged with and contributed to Anglo-American literary texts and institutions.

*Memory of Kin* Open Road + Grove/Atlantic

Examines African American writers and artists of the 1950s, tracing leftist ideas and activism within their work, recounts the events of the 1959 Black Writers' Conference and explores the ongoing influence of the Black Popular Front.

Eric Walrond Oxford University Press

Reveals the troubling intimacy between Black women and the making of US global power The year 1968 marked both the height of the worldwide Black liberation struggle and a turning point for the global reach of American power, which was built on the counterinsurgency honed on Black and other oppressed populations at home. The next five decades saw the consolidation of the culture of the American empire through what Erica R. Edwards calls the "imperial grammars of blackness." This is a story of state power at its most devious and most absurd, and, at the same time, a literary history of Black feminist radicalism at its most trenchant. Edwards reveals how the long war on terror, beginning with the late-Cold War campaign against organizations like the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and the Black Liberation Army, has relied on the labor and the fantasies of Black women to justify the imperial spread of capitalism. Black feminist writers not only understood that this would demand a shift in racial gendered power, but crafted ways of surviving it. *The Other Side of Terror* offers an interdisciplinary Black feminist analysis of militarism, security, policing, diversity, representation, intersectionality, and resistance, while discussing a wide array of literary and cultural texts, from the unpublished work of Black radical feminist June Jordan to the memoirs of Condoleezza Rice to the television series *Scandal*. With clear, moving prose, Edwards chronicles Black feminist organizing and writing on "the other side of terror", which tracked changes in racial power, transformed African American literature and Black studies, and predicted the crises of our current era with unsettling accuracy.  
*Race Capital?* Columbia University Press

This book examines the formation of a black cultural front by

looking at the works of poet Langston Hughes, novelist Chester Himes, and cartoonist Ollie Harrington. While none of these writers were card-carrying members of the Communist Party, they all participated in the Left during their careers. Interestingly, they all turned to creating popular culture in order to reach the black masses who were captivated by movies, radio, newspapers, and detective novels. There are chapters on Hughes's "Simple" stories, Himes's detective fiction, and Harrington's "Bootsie" cartoons. Collectively, the experience of these three figures contributes to the story of a "long" movement for African American freedom that flourished during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Yet this book also stresses the impact that McCarthyism had on dismantling the Black Left and how it affected each individual involved. Each was radicalized at a different moment and for different reasons.

*King and the Other America* Bloomsbury Publishing

*Stealing the Show* is a study of African American actors in Hollywood during the 1930s, a decade that saw the consolidation of stardom as a potent cultural and industrial force. Petty focuses on five performers whose Hollywood film careers flourished during this period—Louise Beavers, Fredi Washington, Lincoln "Stepin Fetchit" Perry, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and Hattie McDaniel—to reveal the "problematic stardom" and the enduring, interdependent patterns of performance and spectatorship for performers and audiences of color. She maps how these actors—though regularly cast in stereotyped and marginalized roles—employed various strategies of cinematic and extracinematic performance to negotiate their complex positions in Hollywood and to ultimately "steal the show." Drawing on a

variety of source materials, Petty explores these stars' reception among Black audiences and theorizes African American viewership in the early twentieth century. Her book is an important and welcome contribution to the literature on the movies.

*W.E.B. Du Bois* Penguin

Most of the major black literary and cultural movements of the twentieth century have been understood and interpreted as secular, secularizing and, at times, profane. In this book, Josef Sorett demonstrates that religion was actually a formidable force within these movements, animating and organizing African American literary visions throughout the years between the New Negro Renaissance of the 1920s and the Black Arts movement of the 1960s. Sorett unveils the contours of a literary history that remained preoccupied with religion even as it was typically understood by authors, readers, and critics alike to be modern and, therefore, secular. *Spirit in the Dark* offers an account of the ways in which religion, especially Afro-Protestantism, remained pivotal to the ideas and aspirations of African American literature across much of the twentieth century. From the dawn of the New Negro Renaissance until the ascendance of the Black Arts movement, black writers developed a spiritual grammar for discussing race and art by drawing on terms such as "church" and "spirit" that were part of the landscape and lexicon of American religious history. Sorett demonstrates that religion and spirituality have been key categories for identifying and interpreting what was (or was not) perceived to constitute or contribute to black literature and culture. By examining figures and movements that have typically been cast as "secular," he

offers theoretical insights that trouble the boundaries of what counts as "sacred" in scholarship on African American religion and culture. Ultimately, *Spirit in the Dark* reveals religion to be an essential ingredient, albeit one that was always questioned and contested, in the forging of an African American literary tradition.

**Democracy in Africa** Stanford University Press

This collection of fifteen new essays explores the impact of the organized Left and Leftist theory on American literature and culture from the 1920s to the present. In particular, the contributors explore the participation of writers and intellectuals on the Left in the development of African American, Chicano/Chicana, and Asian American literature and culture. By placing the Left at the center of their examination, the authors reposition the interpretive framework of American cultural studies. Tracing the development of the Left over the course of the last century, the essays connect the Old Left of the pre-World War II era to the New Left and Third World nationalist Left of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as to the multicultural Left that has emerged since the 1970s. Individual essays explore the Left in relation to the work of such key figures as Ralph Ellison, T. S. Eliot, Chester Himes, Harry Belafonte, Americo Paredes, and Alice Childress. The collection also reconsiders the role of the Left in such critical cultural and historical moments as the Harlem Renaissance, the Cold War, and the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The contributors are Anthony Dawahare, Barbara Foley, Marcial Gonzalez, Fred Ho, William J. Maxwell, Bill V. Mullen, Cary Nelson, B. V. Olguin, Rachel Rubin, Eric Schocket, James Smethurst, Michelle Stephens, Alan Wald, and Mary Helen Washington.

**Black-eyed Susans** Metropolitan Museum of Art

This book provides the first comprehensive overview of the history of democracy in Africa and explains why the continent's democratic experiments have so often failed, as well as how they could succeed. Nic Cheeseman grapples with some of the most important questions facing Africa and democracy today, including whether international actors should try and promote democracy abroad, how to design political systems that manage ethnic diversity, and why democratic governments often make bad policy decisions. Beginning in the colonial period with the introduction of multi-party elections and ending in 2013 with the collapse of democracy in Mali and South Sudan, the book describes the rise of authoritarian states in the 1970s; the attempts of trade unions and some religious groups to check the abuse of power in the 1980s; the remarkable return of multiparty politics in the 1990s; and finally, the tragic tendency for elections to exacerbate corruption and violence.

*Modern American Drama: Playwriting in the 1950s* Anchor

How forty-one women—including Dorothy Parker, Gypsy Rose Lee, and Lena Horne—were forced out of American television and radio in the 1950s "Red Scare." At the dawn of the Cold War era, forty-one women working in American radio and television were placed on a media blacklist and forced from their industry. The ostensible reason: so-called Communist influence. But in truth these women—among them Dorothy Parker, Lena Horne, and Gypsy Rose Lee—were, by nature of their diversity and ambition, a threat to the traditional portrayal of the American family on the airwaves. This book from Goldsmiths Press describes what American radio and television lost when these women were

blacklisted, documenting their aspirations and achievements. Through original archival research and access to FBI blacklist documents, *The Broadcast 41* details the blacklisted women's attempts in the 1930s and 1940s to depict America as diverse, complicated, and inclusive. The book tells a story about what happens when non-male, non-white perspectives are excluded from media industries, and it imagines what the new medium of television might have looked like had dissenting viewpoints not been eliminated at such a formative moment. The all-white, male-dominated *Leave it to Beaver* America about which conservative politicians wax nostalgic existed largely because of the forcible silencing of these forty-one women and others like them. For anyone concerned with the ways in which our cultural narrative is constructed, this book offers an urgent reminder of the myths we perpetuate when a select few dominate the airwaves.

**Remaking Black Power** UNC Press Books

A provocative, raucous dark comedy about race and racism in America, now back in print after twenty-five years and with a new preface by the author. Darius James's scabrous, unapologetically raunchy, truly hilarious, and deeply scary *Negrophobia* is a wild-eyed reckoning with the mutating insanity of American racism. A screenplay for the mind, a performance on the page, a work of poetry, a mad mix of genres and styles, a novel in the tradition of William S. Burroughs and Ishmael Reed that is like no other novel, *Negrophobia* begins with the blonde bombshell Bubbles Brazil succumbing to a voodoo spell and entering the inner darkness of her own shiny being. Here crackheads parade in the guise of Muppets, Muslims beat conga drums, Negroes have numbers for

names, and H. Rap Remus demands the total and instantaneous extermination of the white race through spontaneous combustion. By the end of it all, after going on a weird trip for the ages, Bubbles herself is strangely transformed.

*Arise!* Columbia University Press

Taking her cue from W. E. B. Du Bois, Juliana Spahr explores how state interests have shaped U.S. literature. What is the relationship between literature and politics? Can writing be revolutionary? Can art be autonomous or is escape from nations and nationalisms impossible? As her sobering study affirms, aesthetic resistance is easily domesticated.

*Winning Our Freedoms Together* Columbia University Press

How to make a rope : an introduction -- How to make a flag : internationalism and the pivot of 1848 -- How to make a map : small shareholders and global radicals in revolutionary Mexico -- How to make a university : Ricardo Flores Magón and internationalism in Leavenworth Penitentiary -- How to make love : Alexandra Kollontai and the nationalization of women -- How to make a living : Dorothy Healey & Southern California struggles for relief & revolution -- How to make a dress : Elizabeth Catlett, black feminist internationalism, & cultural resistance -- How to make history : conclusion.

**F.B. Eyes** New York Review of Books

"For me, people come first," Alice Neel (1900–1984) declared in 1950. "I have tried to assert the dignity and eternal importance of the human being." This ambitious publication surveys Neel's nearly 70-year career through the lens of her radical humanism. Remarkable portraits of victims of the Great Depression, fellow residents of Spanish Harlem, leaders of political organizations,

queer artists, visibly pregnant women, and members of New York's global diaspora reveal that Neel viewed humanism as both a political and philosophical ideal. In addition to these paintings of famous and unknown sitters, the more than 100 works highlighted include Neel's emotionally charged cityscapes and still lifes as well as the artist's erotic pastels and watercolors. Essays tackle Neel's portrayal of LGBTQ subjects; her unique aesthetic language, which merged abstraction and figuration; and her commitment to progressive politics, civil rights, feminism, and racial diversity. The authors also explore Neel's highly personal preoccupations with death, illness, and motherhood while reasserting her place in the broader cultural history of the 20th century.

Du Bois's Telegram Columbia University Press

This collection brings together interviews with a compelling range of musicians, artists, and activists from around the globe. What does it mean for an artist to be "political"? Moving away from a narrow idea about politics that is organized around elections, advocacy groups, or concrete manifestos, the subjects of Creative Activism do their work through song, poetry, painting, and other arts. The interviews take us from Oakland to London to Johannesburg and from the Occupy movement to the coal mines of Appalachia to the fantasy worlds created by some of our most fascinating writers of spectacular fiction. Listening to the important "cultural workers" of our time challenges any idea that some other time was the golden age of political art: Creative Activism gives us a front-row seat to the thrilling artistic activism of our own moment.

**Communists in Closets** Bloomsbury Publishing

Mary Helen Washington recovers the vital role of 1950s leftist politics in the works and lives of modern African American writers and artists. While most histories of McCarthyism focus on the devastation of the blacklist and the intersection of leftist politics and American culture, few include the activities of radical writers and artists from the Black Popular Front. Washington's work incorporates these black intellectuals back into our understanding of mid-twentieth-century African American literature and art and expands our understanding of the creative ferment energizing all of America during this period. Mary Helen Washington reads four representative writers—Lloyd Brown, Frank London Brown, Alice Childress, and Gwendolyn Brooks—and surveys the work of the visual artist Charles White. She traces resonances of leftist ideas and activism in their artistic achievements and follows their balanced critique of the mainstream liberal and conservative political and literary spheres. Her study recounts the targeting of African American as well as white writers during the McCarthy era, reconstructs the events of the 1959 Black Writers' Conference in New York, and argues for the ongoing influence of the Black Popular Front decades after it folded. Defining the contours of a distinctly black modernism and its far-ranging radicalization of American politics and culture, Washington fundamentally reorients scholarship on African American and Cold War literature and life.

*Negrophobia* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

In *The Black Calhouns*, Gail Lumet Buckley—daughter of actress Lena Horne—delves deep into her family history, detailing the experiences of an extraordinary African-American family from Civil War to Civil Rights. Beginning with her great-great

grandfather Moses Calhoun, a house slave who used the rare advantage of his education to become a successful businessman in post-war Atlanta, Buckley follows her family's two branches: one that stayed in the South, and the other that settled in Brooklyn. Through the lens of her relatives' momentous lives, Buckley examines major events throughout American history. From Atlanta during Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow, to New York City during the Harlem Renaissance, and then from World War II to the Civil Rights Movement, this ambitious, brilliant family witnessed and participated in the most crucial events of the 19th and 20th centuries. Combining personal and national history, *The Black Calhouns* is a unique and vibrant portrait of six generations during dynamic times of struggle and triumph.

[Let America Be America Again](#) Univ of California Press

Eric Walrond (1898–1966) was a writer, journalist, caustic critic, and fixture of 1920s Harlem. His short story collection, *Tropic Death*, was one of the first efforts by a black author to depict Caribbean lives and voices in American fiction. Restoring Walrond to his proper place as a luminary of the Harlem Renaissance, this biography situates *Tropic Death* within the author's broader corpus and positions the work as a catalyst and driving force behind the New Negro literary movement in America. James Davis follows Walrond from the West Indies to Panama, New York, France, and finally England. He recounts his relationships with New Negro authors such as Countée Cullen, Charles S. Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, Alain Locke, and Gwendolyn Bennett, as well as the white novelist Carl Van Vechten. He also recovers Walrond's involvement with Marcus Garvey's journal *Negro World* and the National Urban League journal *Opportunity* and examines

the writer's work for mainstream venues, including *Vanity Fair*. In 1929, Walrond severed ties with Harlem, but he did not disappear. He contributed to the burgeoning anticolonial movement and print culture centered in England and fueled by C. L. R. James, George Padmore, and other Caribbean expatriates. His history of Panama, shelved by his publisher during the Great Depression, was the first to be written by a West Indian author. Unearthing documents in England, Panama, and the United States, and incorporating interviews, criticism of Walrond's fiction and journalism, and a sophisticated account of transnational black cultural formations, Davis builds an eloquent and absorbing narrative of an overlooked figure and his creation of modern American and world literature.

**Alice Neel: People Come First** University Press of Kentucky  
Will the truth harm them -- or save them? When Nigeria's corrupt military government kills their mother, twelve-year-old Sade and her brother Femi think their lives are over. Out of fear for their safety, their father, an outspoken journalist, decides to smuggle the children out of Nigeria and into London, where their uncle lives. But when they get to the cold and massive city, they find themselves lost and alone, with no one to trust and no idea when -- or if -- they will ever see their father again. *The Other Side of Truth* is a gripping adventure story about courage, family, and the power of truth.

[Spirit in the Dark](#) Jonathan Ball Publishers

A collection of interviews, speeches, and essays by Langston Hughes. *Let America Be America Again: Conversations with Langston Hughes* is a record of a remarkable man talking. In texts ranging from early interviews in the 1920s, when he was a



busboy and scribbling out poems on hotel napkins, to major speeches, such as his keynote address at the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, Senegal, in 1966, Hughes's words further amplify the international reputation he established over the course of five decades through more widely-published and well-known poems, stories, novels, and plays. In these interviews, speeches, and conversational essays, the writer referred to by admirers as the "Poet Laureate of the Negro Race" and the "Dean of Black Letters" articulated some of his most powerful critiques of fascism, economic and racial oppression, and compromised democracy. It was also through these genres that Hughes spoke

of the responsibilities of the Black artist, documented the essential contributions of Black people to literature, music, and theatre, and chronicled the substantial challenges that Black artists face in gaining recognition, fair pay, and professional advancement. And it was through these pieces, too, that Hughes built on his celebrated work in other literary genres to craft an original, tragic-comic persona—a Blues poet in exile, forever yearning for and coming back to a home, a nation, that nevertheless continues to disappoint and harm him. A global traveler, Hughes's words, "Let America be America Again" were, throughout his career, always followed by a caveat: "America never was America to me."