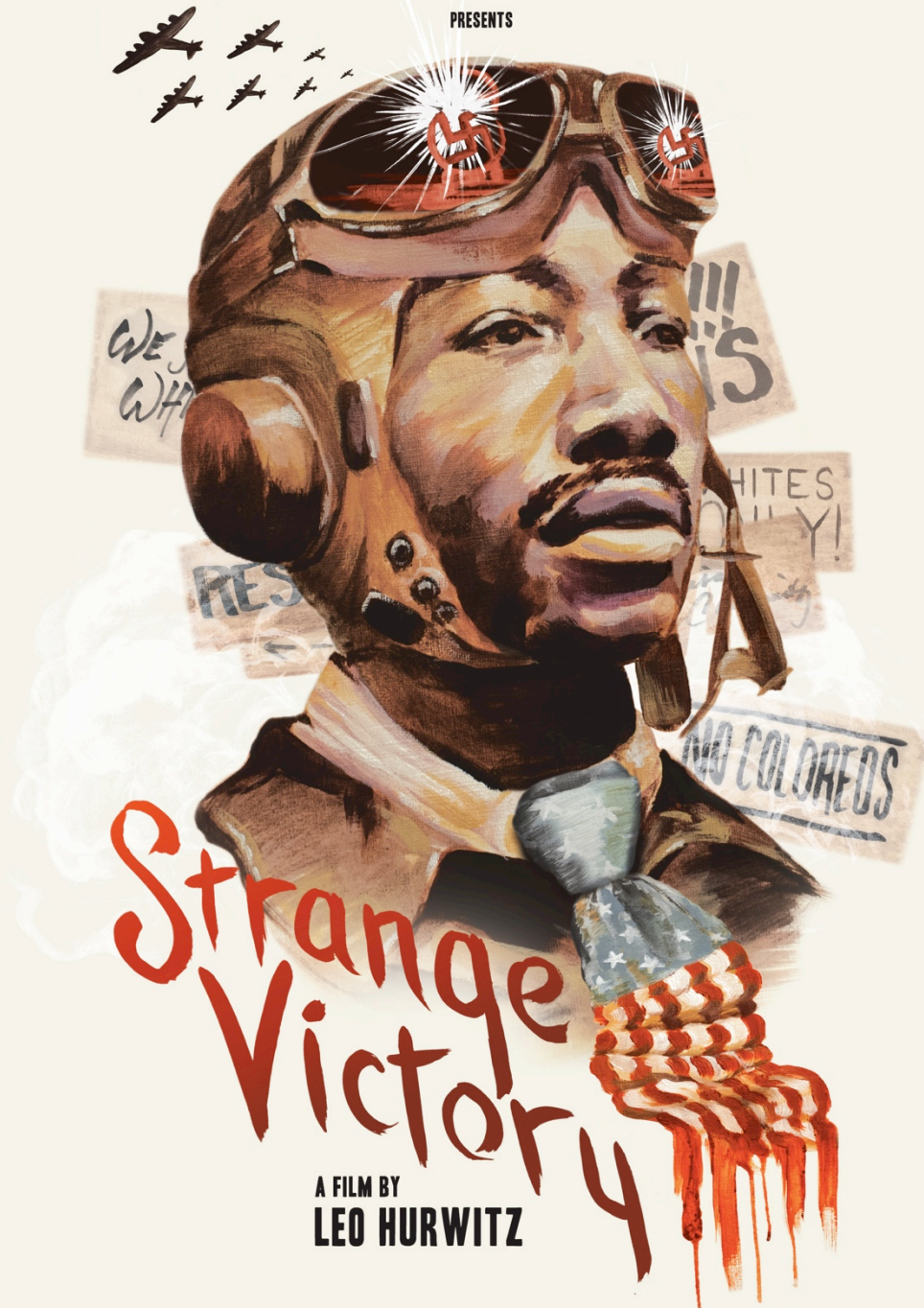


MILESTONE FILM

PRESENTS



A FILM BY
LEO HURWITZ

A MILESTONE FILM RELEASE. PRODUCED BY BARNEY L. ROSSET DIRECTED BY LEO HURWITZ SCRIPT BY SAUL LEVITT LEO HURWITZ CINEMATOGRAPHY PETER GLUSHANOK GEORGE JACOBSEN
EDITORS LEO HURWITZ FAITH ELLIOTT MAVIS LYONS WITH VIRGIL RICHARDSON SOPHIE MASLOW MUSIC DAVID DIAMOND NARRATORS ALFRED DRAKE MURIAL SMITH GARY MERRILL SAUL LEVITT
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Milestone Films presents

Strange Victory

Director Leo Hurwitz
Producer Barney L. Rosset
Writer Saul Levitt
Original Screenplay Leo Hurwitz
Editors Leo Hurwitz, Faith Elliott (Hubley), Mavis Lyons
Cinematographers Peter Glushanok, George Jacobsen
Production Company Target Films
Music David Diamond
News Cam George Jacobson

Cast:
Narrator Alfred Drake
Narrator Muriel Smith
Narrator Gary Merrill
Narrator Saul Levitt
Actor Virgil Richardson
Actor Sophie Maslow
Actor Cathey McGregor
Actor Jack Henderson
Actor Robert P. Donley

Released: September 25, 1948

Running time: 64 minutes

Released in 35mm, Black & White

Awards: Karlovy Vary Film Festival, Venice Film Festival, best film honors at the Marienbad Film Festival (1949)

Digital Restoration Producer Milestone Film & Video (Dennis Doros and Amy Heller)
Scanning and Digital Restoration Metropolis Post
Colorist Jason Crump
Digital Restoration Ian Bostick

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New Appreciation for *Strange Victory*

Strange Victory was the first solo film by Leo Hurwitz, a central character in the radical Frontier Film movement. It is both an exposé and inside view of the facts of the Cold War as experienced at the very moment of its birth. The director's vision amounts to an almost surrealist network of images and sounds about the perverse consequences of the "strange victory"—how high hopes are destroyed, and the flowers of evil grow instead, with aggressive Capitalism and anti-Semitism taking over, vampire-like, all aspects of everyday life, probably including personalities who had natural goodness in them. It's not just a Cold War, it is also a civil war. The chilling existence of American fascism is revealed through a puzzle of collage materials. Hurwitz utilizes both archival material ("found footage") and material he has shot himself—and, as with some other rare examples, the technically uneven material somehow, on a par with its splendid montage, just blossoms into visual brilliance.

Tens and even hundreds of faces flash on screen, with a poignant testimony in them: there are too many terrible faces on the street. There, in the familiar circumstances of peaceful life, we can detect horror and degradation, welling deeper than that of a horror movie. These are flashes that can't be reduced to the pseudo-ideas of "left-wing" propaganda. The dramaturgy is an open one, respecting the intelligence of the spectator, and proceeding in sharp turns: dramatic condensations, fascinatingly illusory plot turns (the search for Hitler—"the biggest man hunt in history"), and paradoxes. *V-Day* is like a ghost: "If we did win, why do we look as if we lost?" The doubts that were growing, even from 1945's summer of great hope, are delivered as a play of light and shadow, something that is profoundly connected to the very essence of cinema.

— Peter von Bagh, film historian

The setup of this extraordinary documentary essay (featuring journalistic research, archival footage, and fictional reconstructions) is that of a film noir, but Hurwitz, with his audacious editing and blunt commentary, infuses it with a substance far more radical and harrowing than anything Hollywood could produce. The horrors of a world in which concentration camps functioned untouched are shown to have a pathological parallel in American prejudice—anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and especially racism in all its forms, from job and housing discrimination to lynching, the victims of which Hurwitz calls "the casualties of a war." Tracking Hitler's rise to power, Hurwitz is shocked to find "the ideas of the loser still active in the land of the winner." The film acts as a kind of collective psychoanalysis; its findings are yet to be worked through.

— Richard Brody, *The New Yorker*



Strange Victory was created during a time when any critique of American society was seen as bordering on treason. In many ways, the isolationism and conservatism of the postwar years was a response to the period of progressive activism that had preceded World War II.

In the 1930s, the poverty and mass unemployment of the Great Depression created a groundswell of support for social equality. The Communist Party of the United States and other left-leaning organizations were popular with both workers and intellectuals seeking a better society. Reflecting the Popular Front policy introduced by the Comintern in 1934, the CPUSA worked in cooperation with other progressive organizations and even actively supported the New Deal policies of president Franklin D. Roosevelt. At its height in 1939, the CPUSA had approximately 50,000 members (a very small fraction of the US population of 130,900,000), although how many were active and how many were sympathetic to the cause is unknown.

In 1939, when the Soviet Union and Germany signed the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Agreement (officially the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), many CPUSA members and allies saw the treaty as a betrayal of the ideals of the movement and of the people of Eastern Europe and Finland. Following the signing of the pact, the CPUSA insisted that Popular Front groups no longer oppose Nazi Germany, thus destroying many existing anti-Fascist alliances. When the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League changed its name to the Committee for Democratic Action, it lost support from the film community. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was broken when German troops invaded the USSR in June 1941.

Although during World War II, the United States and Soviet Union were allied against the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan, this coalition was inherently fragile and did not last. Following VE Day, the Soviet Union began instituting policies preventing its republics and people from any contact with the rest of Europe and the USA. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill dubbed this Soviet isolationism an "Iron Curtain" (although he did not originate the phrase). During the war, the USSR had gained control of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and it went on to annex other Eastern European countries including Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Albania and East Germany.

In response, and for its own internal and international reasons, the US government (now lead by president Harry S. Truman) moved away from political engagement with the USSR and much of American society retreated into a defensive shell, viewing anything foreign with suspicion. One manifestation of this was the second Red Scare (the first Red Scare took place following WWI). Today, most people think of postwar anti-communism as “McCarthyism” (named after Republican US senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, who accused many in and out of the government of being current or former members of the CPUSA), but the paranoia and persecution both pre-dated the senator and was a nationwide phenomenon.

In March 1947, President Truman signed an executive order creating the “Federal Employees Loyalty Program,” establishing political-loyalty review boards to determine the trustworthiness of federal employees and to recommend termination of those who had confessed to spying for the Soviet Union as well as some suspected of being “Un-American.” That same year, the Taft-Hartley Act required union leaders to file affidavits declaring that they were not supporters of the Communist Party and had no relationship with any organization seeking the “overthrow of the United States government by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional means.” In response, the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) fired union leaders and expelled several left-leaning national unions.

It was a time of loyalty oaths, naming names...and blacklists. The first systematic Hollywood blacklist was instituted on November 25, 1947, the day after ten writers and directors were cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (also called HUAC). A group of studio executives acting together fired all the members of the so-called “Hollywood Ten.” To make blacklisting easier, in 1950, three former FBI agents and a founder of the racist John Birch society began publishing a pamphlet titled *Red Channels* that identified 151 entertainment industry professionals as “Red Fascists and their sympathizers.” Soon most of those named, along with a host of other artists, were barred from employment in most areas of the entertainment field. Perhaps in part due to his work on *Strange Victory*, director Leo Hurwitz was named in the publication and throughout the 1950s and 1960s was only able to work anonymously for CBS-TV Omnibus. As a Jew, Hurwitz had faced injustice and discrimination. Barney Rosset, although born to wealth, faced obstacles in the military because he was half-Jewish and an avowed liberal. After the war, he also struggled to find work.

In this climate, *Strange Victory*, which compared the people of postwar America to the Fascist enemies the country had defeated, was unlikely to gain critical or box office success. The film challenged the blandly patriotic and self-congratulatory sentiment popular in postwar America and unmasked the hypocrisy of domestic race relations following the country’s victory over an overtly racist and genocidal enemy. Having just defeated Nazism, US soldiers had returned to an all-too-similar environment at home. African Americans were still oppressed, discriminated against, segregated into inferior housing and education, denied the right to vote, and subject to violence at the hands of both mobs and police. Black veterans who had just been in charge of piloting aircraft came home to find that they were only employable in unskilled positions.

Hurwitz filmed scenes of segregation and lynchings and the film boldly proclaimed that “the color of your skin...the slant of your eyes...the breadth of your nostrils...the shape of your nose” determined the fate of children born into the utopia of postwar America. While Jews in Nazi Germany had been forced to wear a yellow star to mark them, minorities in America wore invisible labels that limited their rights and governed their lives. In a country formed by immigrants, anti-immigrant messages and beliefs echoed throughout the nation.

The film provided statistics on African Americans in the postwar workforce: out of the 80,000 civil engineers employed, fewer than 100 were black. Of 200,000 doctors and dentists, just 2% were black. Sadly, comparing these numbers to the modern-day workforce, we find that today, out of 262,170 civil engineers,

just 6.4% are black; out of 893,851 doctors, 3.8% are black; out of 90,000 employed architects, 2% are black; and black attorneys account for only 3% of lawyers at big firms.

In Hurwitz's original script for *Strange Victory* (courtesy of the George Eastman House from the Hurwitz Collection), the director provides some insight into his and Rosset's theme for the film.

Though our dead were not all buried, we had the right to celebrate. We lifted off the weight of years of war. We turned on the lights. We were happy. We smiled for every camera. We climbed telephone poles, and hung the Axis leaders in effigy. We rode on our neighbors' backs. We kissed the nearest girl. A holiday long pent-up, celebrating a freer, peaceful future – celebrating no more war – celebrating a United World. We had seen the end of Hitler and Mussolini and the might of Japan. We had seen the end of international hate and the German Aryan superman... the end of satanic anti-Semitism... We had seen the end of all the monstrous acts of man which grew from the idea that one people was worthy of the whole earth and all others were to be crushed, enslaved, or burned into manure for the fields... But America is not a single place, a single idea, a single aim. Today – there are those among us whose first concern is: your color – your religion – your birthplace – your beliefs. They ask whether your life is insecure, whether you are unemployed. Then they give their answers: the danger is the JEWS. Your enemy is the POPE. The NEGRO threatens white supremacy...

You will have to understand this complicated civilization. And you will be wise to accept facts as they are, adapt to them, if you want to get along. Though you all look alike and pretty anonymous, you will soon be branded. There are small variations that make all the difference... The best brand to have is W X F; that means White Christian, Protestant. You don't have any choice in the matter, but if you have this brand, you're off to a good start... Or, if you are one of three million other American, you will find many doors to clubs, jobs, and houses closed to you. Your brand will be W J – white, Jewish. As I said before, these letters are not going to be burned into you – no need to cry – these are facts that you are going to have to face as the Class of America, Twentieth Century.

Nativism in America

During and after World War II, nationalist fervor was at its highest level in the US and many flag-wavers couched their patriotism in terms of hatred for ethnic, racial, and religious minorities. While many were appalled by the Nazi concentration camps, some Americans justified the imprisonment of more than 120,000 Japanese-Americans in internment camps. Xenophobic, racist and anti-immigrant sentiments remained popular in this country formed on the basis of immigration. Segregation was a part of everyday life and the doctrine of "separate but equal" had legitimate legal standing—even if separation always resulted in inequality. Housing, schools and employment opportunities for blacks were inferior to those available to whites. Black students were barred from most universities and many colleges had quotas that limited the numbers of other minorities, including Jews.

While the convict lease system of incarceration (which had imprisoned many Southern blacks for minor or nonexistent crimes) had been abolished during the war, partly because its existence embarrassed the US government, peonage and sharecropping continued to keep many poor blacks and whites entrapped in a system of low pay and chronic indebtedness to company or plantation stores.

Conservative and racist elements of American society operated through political means (like HUAC), non-governmental efforts (like the *Red Channels'* blacklists) and ad hoc violence (including lynch mobs) to isolate and persecute those who did not abide by the strict social norms of its hierarchical structure.

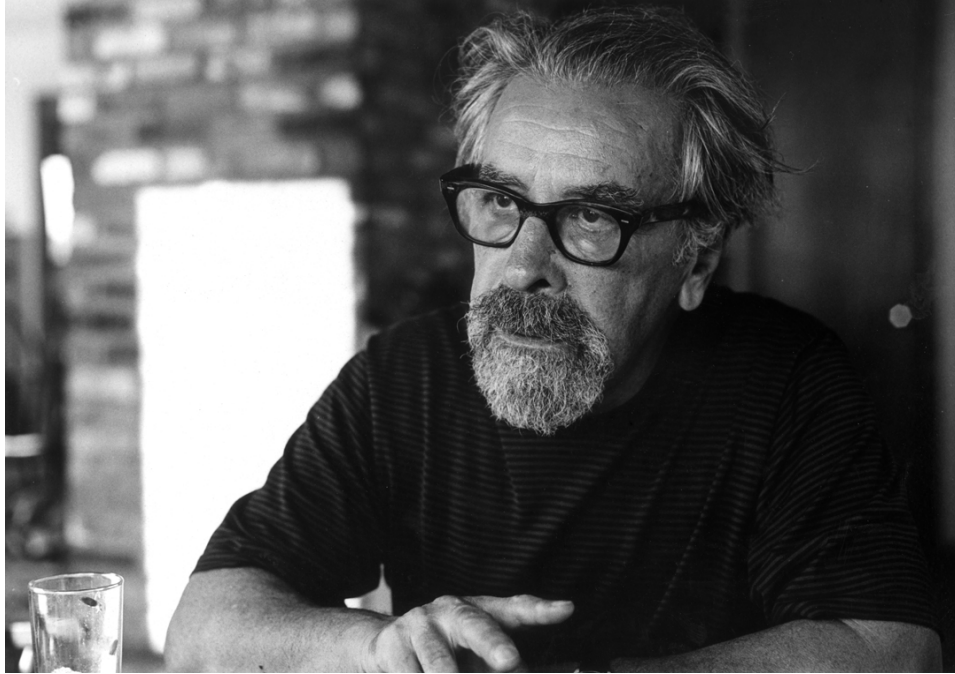
Who's Who in *Strange Victory*

The film identifies several leaders of American fascist and racist movements.

- **Joe McWilliams**, was well known for his rallies and speeches that blamed Jews, Communists, and businessman for the world's problems. He attempted to run for Congress twice but failed both times due to his lack of a following.
- **William Dudley Pelley**, who was a notorious American fascist who, along with
- **Gerald K. Smith** founded the Silver Legion of America, an underground organization. Pelley and Smith preached toxic brews of anti-Semitism, nationalism, and mysticism.
- **George E. Deatherage** was an important player in domestic and international anti-Jewish circles and a collaborator with propaganda agencies.
- Democratic Congressman **John Elliot Rankin** was well known for his opposition to the Civil Rights Movement and his involvement with the Ku Klux Klan.
- **Merwin Hart** was a New York business consultant who was denounced by the National Economic Council for his anti-Semitism.
- **Lawrence Dennis** was a Harvard-educated economist and diplomat who advocated fascism in America and was tried for sedition in 1944.
- **Homer Loomis** and **Emory Burke**, were veterans of numerous white supremacist and fascist groups and leaders of the Columbians, the nation's first neo-Nazi political organization.

The film also features footage of Nazi leaders at the Nuremberg Trials.

- **Hermann Goering** was a German politician, military leader of the German air force, and leading member of the Nazi Party. After helping Adolf Hitler take power in 1933, he became the second most powerful man in Germany.
- **Joachim von Ribbentrop** was a German diplomat, foreign minister under the Nazi regime, and chief negotiator of the treaties with which Germany entered the war. Ribbentrop's greatest diplomatic action was the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of August 23, 1939, which cleared the way for Hitler's attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, beginning World War II.
- **Rudolf Hess**, a prominent politician in Nazi Germany, was appointed Deputy Führer of the Nazi Party and received a post in Hitler's cabinet. He was the third most powerful man in Germany, behind only Hitler and Goering. In addition to appearing on Hitler's behalf at speaking engagements and rallies, Hess signed into law much of the legislation, including the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which stripped the Jews of Germany of their rights in the lead up to the Holocaust.
- **Alfred Rosenberg** was the official National Socialist Ideologist and the main influencer for the unification of German thought; he supervised all ideological education and training within the Nazi Party.
- **Hans Fritzsche** was a senior Nazi Party official who worked in the Propaganda Ministry and used his journalist skills to sway news towards the Nazi viewpoint.
- **Erich Raeder** was a proponent of an aggressive naval strategy, Grand Admiral of the German Navy, and the man who convinced Hitler to invade Norway.
- **Franz von Papen** was a former chancellor of Germany who became entwined with the Nazi Party when he convinced officials to appoint Adolf Hitler as German chancellor. Papen played a major role in dissolving the Weimar Republic, paving the way for Hitler to take control of Germany.
- **Wilhelm Keitel**, the Commander in Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces was a loyal follower of Hitler. Keitel issued orders for the extermination of Jews, the execution of striking workers, and the killings of captured partisans. He also urged German civilians to lynch captured Allied airman.



Leo Hurwitz
(June 23, 1909–January 18, 1991)

Leo Hurwitz was born just as the cinema was making its spectacular rise into a mainstream entertainment. His parents emigrated to New York from Russia with four children and went on to have four more; Leo was the last. Hurwitz's father, Solomon, who had been an anarchist in Ukraine (and had named Leo after Tolstoy and his son Peter, after Kropotkin), wrote for the Yiddish-language *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (*Free Voice of Labor*). One of Hurwitz's most vivid childhood memories was going to the movies at around age four with his older sisters, Sophia and Eleanor. Sitting in the darkened theater and watching the monumental images on the screen, the young boy felt as if he had been literally hit over the head. He later decided that he knew there was something wrong with a film if the transition from the movie to the reality outside the theater was so jarring that it gave him that "hit on the head" sensation. Hurwitz preferred films that reflected reality and his motto as a filmmaker was to move "away from the world of seduction."

While in high school, Hurwitz learned about the Harvard Club Scholarship from his brother-in-law, Paul Anderson and decided to sit for the exam. A gifted and hard-working student, he won the award and attended Harvard. Although he graduated *summa cum laude*, Hurwitz was rejected for an international merit-based fellowship. His tutor, among others, attributed this rejection to his Jewish roots. Hurwitz's son Tom sees his father's attendance at an Ivy League university and then his post-college struggles to survive as a metaphor for the high-flying 1920s and the depression of the 1930s.

Despite his achievements and education, Hurwitz struggled to secure employment due to the Great Depression. He was able to find work as an editor of *New Theater Magazine*. Frustrated with the biased and subpar coverage of newscasters, Hurwitz turned to creating documentary films using the techniques he had learned from his Russian counterparts, especially their montage editing and emphasis on visuals.

Hurwitz soon discovered the Worker's Film and Photo League. The League, founded in 1930, included directors Paul Strand, Irving Lerner, Ralph Steiner, Lionel Berman, Ben Maddow, Sidney Meyers, Jay Leyda, and Lewis Jacobs. Before the establishment of this League, it was a rarity for progressive filmmakers to display their work regardless of education.

With amazing serious of purpose, these newcomers to cinema, overwhelmingly Jewish, often college educated during the boom time, now unemployed and politically awakened, they set about creating the documentary film in the United States....The desire to be relevant to their world led to a desire to change it."

—Tom Hurwitz (Leo Hurwitz's son)

Many had a unique perspective on the political and social tensions of the times and expressed their opinions by creating revolutionary films that challenged the status quo. Between 1931 and 1934, there was an enormous increase in workers' art movements across the US and dozens of leagues were formed to support dancers, artists, and eventually, filmmakers from the working class. Some believed the establishment of these leagues was directly stimulated by the Soviet Union's proclamation of art as a valuable weapon against oppression.

The Worker's Film and Photo League's main goal was not artistic—many of the filmmakers sought to provoke audiences through their work without considering the aesthetic value of their films. Hurwitz opposed this disregard for the artistry of filmmaking. He recognized the importance of editing and the complex beauty of the apposition of shots to convey his message.

Hurwitz joined with fellow Film and Photo Leaguers, Ralph Steiner and Sidney Meyers to create Nykino, an organization that strove to use artistic measures to appeal to audiences while still conveying a meaningful message. The Workers Film and Photo League members saw Nykino as elitists who were deviating from the mission of the League. Nykino continued growing and attracting new filmmakers, however, and the League faded to obscurity.

The new freedom espoused by Nykino allowed Hurwitz to create a new method of storytelling unlike that of conventional American films of the time. Through the League, Hurwitz met and began to make films with still photographer Paul Strand. Their collaborations, *The Plow That Broke the Plain*, *Heart of Spain* and *Native Land* merged their strengths in photography, writing and direction and set new standards for nonfiction filmmaking. In fact, some authors have referred to Hurwitz's films as being postmodern, even though they were produced before the postmodernism movement began. Eventually Nykino transformed into Hurwitz and Strand's company, Frontier Films, the first nonprofit organization that served documentary filmmakers.

In 1942 Frontier Films released *Native Land*, a film that creatively depicted the class struggle in America. Hurwitz did not receive as much funding for *Native Land* as he had hoped and both production and distribution proved to be challenges. The practice of block booking, where theaters would only program films from certain studios had become popular. Frontier Films particularly struggled with this formidable obstacle because they were only able to show their films in a few independent art-houses around the country. While distribution was being sought for *Native Land*, many of the directors who had been associated with Nykino and Frontier Films ended up leaving the company. This increased the financial and creative burden placed on Hurwitz.

In the end, *Native Land* ended up being a disappointment because it never received the recognition Hurwitz felt it deserved. However, over the years the film, co-directed by Paul Strand, narrated by Paul Robeson and with a musical score by Marc Blitzstein, has been recognized as a classic of the social documentary. During World War II Hurwitz worked on films for the Office of War Information, the British Information Service

and other Government agencies. After the war, in the early days of commercial television, he was a producer-director and chief of news and special events for CBS television.

Six years after *Native Land* came the release of *Strange Victory*. Hurwitz and Rosset screened the film for the Communist Party USA hoping for support, but by the time the movie was released the ambitions of the party had changed and their only comment about *Strange Victory* was that it was “nice.” Hurwitz and Rosset had hoped that the Communist countries of Eastern Europe would embrace the film and it would find distribution. When that never came to be, the failure remained a mystery that haunted Rosset.

Around the same time, Hurwitz was working with the DuMont television network to train film cameramen to work in television. After viewing *Strange Victory*, the executives of DuMont were enamored with Hurwitz’s artistic abilities and scheduled an interview for additional jobs with the network. However, when reviews for the film pointed out its “communist undertones,” the network cancelled their interview and Hurwitz was unemployed.

It soon was obvious that Hurwitz was blacklisted from television and film. In order to work in media, filmmakers had to be cleared by the folks who published *Red Channels*. This group, run by the executive of a supermarket chain, required all people involved in media to come before them to be interrogated. Many of Hurwitz’s friends volunteered to be so questioned and immediately cut off any communication with him. Hurwitz himself never stood before the group. The FBI continued collecting information about Hurwitz until he reached the age of sixty. When he reviewed his father’s FBI file, Tom Hurwitz even found a copy of his family’s grocery list. One FBI file explained why Hurwitz’s 1953 request for a passport had been denied:

Hurwitz was advised that evidence on hand indicated on his part a consistent and prolonged adherence to the Communist Party line on a variety of issues and through shifts and changes of that line during many years.

For the next ten years, Hurwitz had to work under a “front,” using the name of a person who had been cleared by *Red Channels* and who would be credited for his work.

In 1951, entrepreneurial *Life Magazine* photographer Fons Iannelli approached Hurwitz with a new idea. Iannelli had developed a prototype of portable, sync-sound filming equipment. Why not try to make documentary films with the same kind of immediacy as the best photojournalism—real events, real people, real sound? Deciding to make a promotional film to interest producers in this new form, Iannelli filmed in the crucible of an urban emergency room. Hurwitz then edited the footage into powerful narrative. In doing so, they were probably the first to realize the growing ambition of a generation of filmmakers to move toward greater and greater immediacy, creating direct cinema. With *Emergency Ward* in hand, Iannelli approached Robert Saudek, producer of the CBS *Omnibus* magazine show, who agreed to make three films using the new technique. But in 1953, Hurwitz was blacklisted and unemployable by any broadcast entity under his own name.

Forced to work for CBS under severe restrictions, Hurwitz could only make television films using Iannelli as his “front.” In 1953, Iannelli was on set “ostensibly” directing “The Young Fighter,” a moving portrait of a young boxer. In fact, he would call Hurwitz on the phone and then relay Leo’s instructions to the crew. “The Young Fighter” was the first broadcast example of a technique that came to be known as *cinéma vérité*. Photographed with lightweight, sync-sound equipment of Iannelli’s own design, it was the most successful of *Omnibus*’s several forays into direct cinema. While working on the second CBS film, “Deaf Boy,” Iannelli and Hurwitz had a falling out. Betraying his colleague, Iannelli claimed sole authorship for the film. But working solo proved to be beyond Iannelli’s capability; “Deaf Boy” was never screened and the third CBS feature was never made.

In 1956, Film Polski contacted Hurwitz to discuss the creation of a film that would inspect the paranoia and fear felt in Eastern Europe as well as Germany. The Polish government agreed to give Hurwitz complete artistic control of the project. The film Hurwitz made, *The Museum and the Fury* addressed the effects of World War II on Poland and has been compared to such classic documentaries as Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* and Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*. However, the producers considered the final film too poetic and too focused on the plight of Polish Jewry and refused to distribute it. Fortunately, Hurwitz was able to raise funds to buy back the rights from Film Polski for \$5000 and retained a print of the film. The narrator of *The Museum and the Fury* observes:

"In the end, no one, it seemed, was guilty. Accidentally, it seems, forty million were dead. No one remembered his guilt."

In 2010, *Village Voice* reviewer Nicholas Rapold wrote of the film: "At once utterly improbable and wildly precocious in the preservation of memory and kinship, in museums and in life, the film is also hypnotic in its (creative) iterative use of inset photos and artwork pans." In fact, it was in creating *The Museum and the Fury* that Hurwitz developed a groundbreaking technique of graphic animation, moving a camera over historical drawings and photos in real-time (an effect that, four decades later, came to be associated with documentarian Ken Burns).

That same year, Hurwitz was approached to take over and complete a unique and hopelessly stalled project. Pan American Airways was trying to make its first travelogue to encourage travel from abroad to the US. Using folk songs and Dvorak's "New World Symphony," Hurwitz, who at the time was prevented from traveling abroad by the State Department because of his "un-American" ideas, succeeded in crafting *USA*, a documentary that was at once light-hearted and profoundly in love with this country and its history. Later, *USA* was used by the same State Department and distributed around the world by the US Information Agency.

Hurwitz's next project was to travel to Israel in 1961 to direct the television coverage of the Adolph Eichmann trial for Capital Cities Television. The trial was filmed (actually videotaped) in its entirety and the 500 hours he produced is an invaluable record of World War II and what Hannah Arendt described as the "banality of evil." Hurwitz's work on the televising of the Eichmann trial ended his blacklisting from network TV and enabled him to travel internationally for the first time in years. Beyond the television coverage, Hurwitz produced a half-hour documentary on the trial called *Verdict for Tomorrow*, which received both Emmy and Peabody awards and invented a kind of documentary later described as a prosecutorial weapon or tool of justice. The footage was also the basis for Eyal Sivan's 1999 documentary *The Specialist*. Hurwitz's work on the Eichmann trial is also now the subject of the BBC drama, "The Eichmann Show," with Anthony LaPaglia and Martin Freeman.

Collaborating with Charles Pratt, Hurwitz filmed an hour-long portrait of New York Harbor in 1962. In 1964, National Educational Television (the precursor to PBS) decided to make a program as a memorial to the late President John F. Kennedy, whose assassination had been broadcast worldwide just a year before. Executive producer and co-writer Brice Howard asked Hurwitz to direct a program that would explore death itself and how the knowledge of mortality encroaches on our lives. Hurwitz used actors, literature, and art to create a powerful evocation of the presence of death in life with, *An Essay on Death: A Memorial to John F. Kennedy*.

Later that decade, Hurwitz made several films on aspects of the arts: an exploration of a magnificent sculpture with *The Sun and Richard Lippold* (1966); a portrait of a great doomed poet, *In Search of Hart Crane* (1966); and a showcase of modern dancer Jane Dudley's choreography, *Haiku* (co-directed with Manfred Kirchheimer in 1965).

In 1966, Hurwitz, Lee R. Bobker, Robert Braverman, Gene Searchinger, Darrell Random, and Hilary T. Harris brought a lawsuit against the Directors Guild of America that resulted in a US Supreme Court decision that forced the DGA to remove a loyalty oath from its membership application.

In 1969, Hurwitz started a new career as a professor of film and chairman of the Graduate Institute of Film and Television at New York University and stayed for five years. With his second wife, Peggy Lawson, he made a series of four films, *The Art of Seeing*. His last completed film was the 1981 *Dialogue With a Woman Departed*, a four-hour visual poem to Lawson.

For many years, Hurwitz was married to Jane Dudley, a dancer with the Martha Graham Company, one of early modern dance's first social-protest choreographers, and a leading teacher of modern dance in the United States and Britain. Their son Tom, born the year before *Strange Victory*, has become a well-respected cinematographer. At the time of his death, Hurwitz was married to Dr. Eleanor Burlingham, a psychiatrist and author. Hurwitz's work continues to be seen around the world in retrospectives showings. Recently, his friend and colleague Manfred Kirchheimer finished a decades-old film they started together, *Discovery in a Painting*.

In 2001, Hurwitz's friend Vijay Seshadri wrote a moving memoir of their relationship that includes this vivid description of the man:

He had a short, solid body, which combined with his no-nonsense discursive style and his habits of indignation to leave the impression of overall bluntness, an impression mitigated by the look of keen rationality in his eyes and by his head and face, which were long and carefully sculpted, and have been described in the nineteenth century as "fine." But this was just his body. Inside this physical frame there lived, waiting to spring forth, the unrelenting champion of the poor and downtrodden, the immemorial working class hero, intellectual-workers' division—dissident, disenchanted, morally fervent.

Leo Hurwitz's Filmography

- 1932 *Detroit Workers News Special*, Director
- 1932–1934 *America Today and the World in Review*, Director
- 1932 *Hunger*, Director, Cinematographer, Editor
- 1933 *The Scottsboro Boys*, Director, Cinematographer, Editor
- 1934 *Sweet Land of Liberty*, Director, Cinematographer, Editor
- 1934–1935 *Granite, Harbour Scenes, Pie in the Sky*, Editor
- 1936 *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, Writer, Cinematographer (as Leo T. Hurwitz)
- 1937 *China Strikes Back*, Director of Editing
- 1937 *People of the Cumberland*, Advisor
- 1937 *Heart of Spain*, Director of filming Herb Klein, Director of Editing Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand, Written by Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand
- 1942 *Native Land*, Photographed by Paul Strand, Edited by Leo Hurwitz, Written by Ben Maddow, Produced by Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand, Directed by Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand
- 1943 *Song of Freedom*, Writer
- 1943 *Bridge of Men*, Writer
- 1943 *Tomorrow We Fly*, Editor
- 1948 ***Strange Victory***, Director, Editor, Writer
- 1951 *This is the United Nations*, Co-Producer
- 1952 “An Evening for Richard Rodgers” (TV), Director
- 1952 *On this Day*, Director, Writer, Editor
- 1952 *Emergency Ward*, Editor
- 1953 *The Young Fighter*, Director, Editor, Writer
- 1955 *Dancing James Berry*, a film by Mura Dehn, Leo Hurwitz and Herbert Matter
- 1956 *The Museum and the Fury*, Director, Producer, Writer, Editor
- 1956 *USA*, Director, Writer, Editor
- 1961 “Eichmann Trial” (TV), Director
- 1961 *Here at the Water's Edge*, a film by Leo Hurwitz and Charles Pratt
- 1962 *Verdict for Tomorrow*, Director, Editorial Supervisor
- 1964–1966 “Essay on Death” (NET-TV), Director, Writer, Editor
- 1965 *Haiku*, a film by Leo Hurwitz and Manfred Kirchheimer
- 1966 “The Sun and Richard Lippold (NET-TV), Producer, Director, Writer, Editor
- 1966 “In Search of Hart Crane” (NET-TV), Producer, Director, Writer, Editor
- 1966 *Do You Know a Man Named Goya*, a film by Leo Hurwitz, Peggy Lawson, and Tom Hurwitz
- 1968–1970 *The Art of Seeing* (Series for the American Federation of Arts)
- *Light and the Country*, a film by Leo Hurwitz and Peggy Lawson
- *Light and the City*, a film by Leo Hurwitz and Peggy Lawson
- *Discovery in a Landscape*, a film by Leo Hurwitz, Peggy Lawson, and Tom Hurwitz
- *Journey Into a Painting*, Director, Writer, Editor
- 1970 *The Island*, Producer, a film by Leo Hurwitz and Peggy Lawson
- 1972–1980 *Dialogue with a Woman Departed*, Narrator, Director, Producer, Editor, Writer
- 2014 *Discovery in a Painting*, A film by Leo Hurwitz and Manfred Kirchheimer

“The Revolutionary Film—Next Step” by Leo Hurwitz, *New Theatre*, 1934

The film movement in America has for some time been faced with the problem of what film forms are its true concern. The Film and Photo Leagues have up to now produced mainly newsreels. They are necessary because of the rigid censorship and the malicious distortion that the capitalist film companies use in their treatment of events relative to labor and labor's struggles. These newsreels serve an agitational and revelational function to arouse the working class, and as a corrective for the lies of the film movement in America has for some time been faced with the problem of what film forms are its true capitalist agencies. A strike, demonstration, or hunger march is shown with the full brutalities of the police, with the full heroism and militancy of the workers, without the distractive mocking comment of the bourgeois announcer.

Because newsreels are fractional, atomic, and incomplete, the revolutionary movement has required a more synoptic form to present a fuller picture of the conditions and struggles of the working class. And so the synthetic documentary film has become an important form for film workers in the revolutionary movement—a form which allows for more inclusive and implicative comment on our class world than the discursive newsreel. For this great and rich medium the bourgeois filmmakers have had little use, since they cannot face the truths that the documentary camera can report. Their lies are better served by a more closely supervised camera in a shadowed studio under the kind sun of California. Aside from a few reels on sports, some shorts of believe-it-or-nots, and the half-truth-half-lies of industrial and “educational” films, Hollywood has ignored the vast possibilities of the synthetic film document.

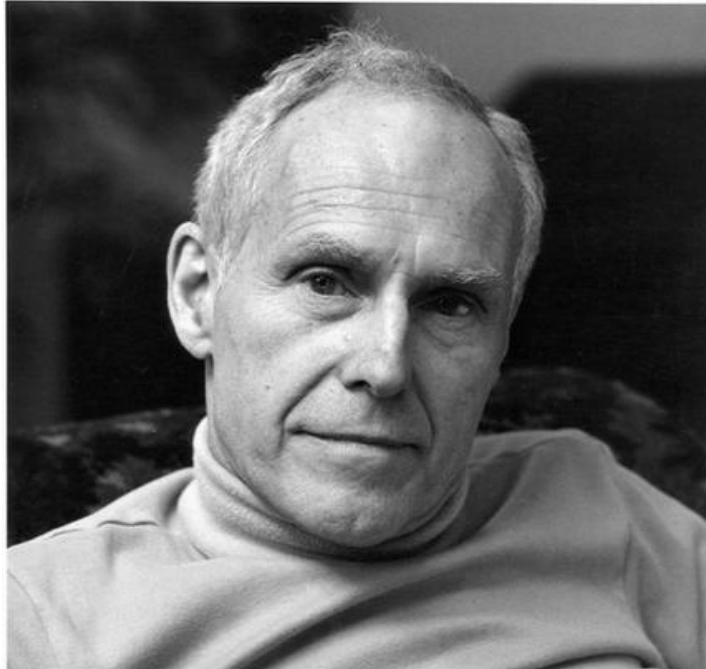
Another factor, besides its great effectiveness, has determined the preoccupation of the radical moviemakers with the documentary film. At this time, with the radicalized working class as small as it is, it is almost impossible for economic and technical reasons to undertake the vast task of producing and distributing revolutionary dramatic films, which, in some ways, are capable of going beyond the document (as the synthetic document transcends the newsreel) in width of scope, synoptic approach, and ability to recreate events and emotions not revealable to the camera in the document.

The problems of documentary montage are very different from that of the dramatic film. The former may be called external montage, the creative comparison, contrast, and opposition of shots, externally related to each other, to produce an effect not contained in any of the shots—or, as Samuel Brody has well described it, “reality recorded on film strips and built up into wholes embodying our revolutionary interpretation of events.” For this type of cutting, *The Man With the Movie Camera* is the textbook of technical possibilities. The dramatic film presents the problem of what may be called internal montage, which is essentially a recreative analysis and reconstruction of an internally related visual event in terms of shots of film, to reveal best the meaning of the event. The documentary film embodies the reporting on film of actual events and the creative addition of these bits of cinematographed reality to render an interpretation of that reality. The dramatic film involves in its cinematography the interpretive breaking-up of the recreated reality, and, in its montage, the synthesis of these analyzed elements to recreate the event on film from a given point of view.

Any acted sequence in an ordinary film will serve as an illustration of internal montage—any direct succession of acts to render a dramatic event. An example of external montage may be taken from a recent newsreel compilation by the New York Film and Photo League. The newsreel shots are sure: President Roosevelt signing a state paper and looking up at the camera with his inimitable self-satisfied smile, and a shot of fleet maneuvers—two shots taken in widely separated times and places and not essentially (but externally) related to each other. By virtue of splicing the shot of the warships just after Roosevelt signs the paper, and following the threatening ships of war with the rest of the first shot (Roosevelt looks up and smiles), a new meaning not contained in either shot, but a product of their new relation on film, is achieved—the meaning of the huge war preparation program of the demagogic Roosevelt government.

External and internal montage, as described here, are by no means mutually exclusive. Both may be used, and in fact have been used frequently to complement each other—sometimes with emphasis on the document, as in *Ten Days That Shook the World*, sometimes with the emphasis on the recreated drama, as in *The End of Saint Petersburg*.

A mixed form of the synthetic document and the dramatic is the next proper concern of the revolutionary film movement: to widen the scope of the document, to add to the document the recreated events necessary to it but resistant to the documentary camera eye—a synthetic documentary film which allows for material which recreates and fortifies the actuality recorded in the document, and makes it clearer and more powerful.



Barney Rosset
(May 28, 1922–February 21, 2012)

Four-time college dropout, Barnet Lee Rosset, Jr. was the brilliant and mercurial gadfly who helped revolutionize publishing in the United States and brought literary masters like Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet and Eugène Ionesco to Americans' attention through his Grove Press imprimatur.

Rosset was born and raised in Chicago to a Jewish father and an Irish Catholic mother. His father's success as a banker created a lifestyle of wealth for the small family, though the son proved quickly to have liberal leanings. Before the age of 13, Barney had already been investigated by the FBI with the warning note, "the subject is left handed." (Later in life Rosset filed to get access to his FBI files under Freedom of Information Act. Reading the Bureau's description of himself as 13-year-old, he loved the phrase so much that he used it for the title of his yet-to-be published autobiography.)

Attending high school at the progressive private Francis W. Parker School, Rosset effectively announced his life's goal when he published a mimeographed journal entitled "The Anti-Everything" and launched the Anti-Everything Club. It was there he met two very important people in his life, future cinematographer Haskell Wexler (whose first wife was an ex-girlfriend of Rosset) and the painter Joan Mitchell (who became the first Mrs. Rosset). His college career wandered from Swathmore College, to UCLA, to New York's New School to the University of Chicago. During WWII, Rosset joined the military and was assigned to the photo and film department, and soon after shipped off to China. The military trained him in photography and film, giving Rosset marketable skills when he finally returned home. His experience, along with heavy subsidies from his family, allowed him to begin his own production company known as Target Films, which in 1948 became the producer of *Strange Victory*.

Where Leo Hurwitz was experienced and realistic in his expectations, Rosset was naïve and idealistic. Rosset admired the work of Frontier Films and sought to create a mutually beneficial relationship. Rosset would provide the funding and Hurwitz could furnish the talent and creativity. Although they came from very different backgrounds both had personally experienced anti-Semitism. In a later interview with *Smoke Signals* magazine, Rosset was quoted:

Strange Victory... was about racial discrimination in America. The theme of the film was very simple. It was about a war we had fought and won. Defeated Hitler... It was a very downbeat film. It was about how we won the war, and crushed Hitler, but he escaped. Escaped and came here. The racial problems came right back to us. Though we had done these wonderful things we did not get rid of racism in our society. So the film was about how it continued to live here. We went into the hospitals and photographed babies, put tags on them, black, Christian, white, Jew, whatever. And showed what place they would have in society. A woman opposed to a man, a black as opposed to a white, and so on. And that was the film. When I looked back at it I was amazed. It showed the place women played in the war. In the industrial effort. It was enormous. Though after the war they were all thrown out. Including by the unions. So the ultimate ending was, we fought a war but we didn't really win. So that was the film. Not a great success (laughter).

The press and the public's response to **Strange Victory** broke up the partnership of Rosset and Hurwitz, partly due to their mutual disappointment and partly to their shared cantankerousness.

Rosset, frustrated with his film experience and lacking direction, moved to Paris in 1948 to start over. The next year, he married his high school friend, Joan Mitchell who was to become an acclaimed abstract expressionist painter. She helped him find his next career, and with that changed publishing history. Rosset described the purchase of a small company that was floundering when he met the owners:

I started it in '51. But it was started before me. I think in 1947 on Grove Street by a man named Robert Balcomb and Robert Feltz, and Cynthia Balcomb who owned the house on Grove Street. They started a publishing company to do reprints. They did three books and then quit. Then I bought out Feltz. Bought out—we're talking \$1,500. And a trunk full of books. And Balcomb, who I discovered I couldn't live with. So I bought out the remaining copies of these books. So that's when I started, but technically it was started on Grove Street by Balcomb and Feltz.

Having always been intrigued by expatriate writer Henry Miller, one of Rosset's first goals from the beginning was to publish Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, an autobiographical, sexually provocative novel that had been published in Paris in 1934 and long banned in the United States. Rosset started with a victorious battle to bring out the similarly banned *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and even then, it took him another ten years, but the book caused more than 60 legal cases seeking to ban it in 21 states. Rosset was arraigned before a Brooklyn Grand Jury, which ultimately decided against indictment. Grove Press sold 100,000 hardcover and one million paperback copies of *Tropic of Cancer* in the first year of publication. It was typical of his brilliant and controversial career, sparked by Rosset's love for a good fight.

With a talented staff (Richard Seaver came on in 1953 and became an invaluable right-hand man to the left-handed Rosset) and great courage, Rosset took on the world by publishing little-understood avant-garde works like Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and banned books like *The Tropic of Cancer* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. His passionate advocacy for freedom of speech would take him all the way to the Supreme Court on several occasions. Grove Press published a wide variety of books, from the controversial works of William Burroughs, Beckett and Allen Ginsberg, to the writings of esteemed Justice William O. Douglas. In 1957, Rosset started the *Evergreen Review*, the proving ground for many emerging authors.

In 1963, Grove Press started a short-lived film production company for which Rosset commissioned screenplays from some of his favorite avant-garde writers. The sole short work completed was *Film by Samuel Beckett*, which sadly, was misunderstood by both critics and the public alike and proved to be Rosset's last produced film.

Rosset fueled the New Left by publishing Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and referred to Grove Press as a "breach in the dam of American Puritanism." In July 1968, a grenade was thrown through a second-story window at the Grove Press office. Anti-Castro Cuban exiles, angry that the Evergreen Review had published parts of Guevara's *The Bolivian Diary*, had caused the explosion.

That same year, Rosset returned to film once again when he bought the catalog of Cinema 16 and hired Amos Vogel to run it. In 1967, he purchased the rights to the erotic Swedish film, *I Am Curious (Yellow)* and waged a long legal battle to screen the film around the country. At one point, Rosset famously purchased a theater in order to show the film and then sold the theater back to the owner after its run. Grove Press Films continued to release important and controversial films.

Rosset also purchased the contents of a Fourth Avenue bookstore containing an enormous collection of 19th-century pornography, which he reprinted under his new and very successful Victorian Library label for Grove Press. But by 1985, saddled with debt dating back to the early 1970s (for the cost of building grand offices) and declining revenues in their film division, Rosset had to sell Grove Press and soon after was unceremoniously dismissed by the new owners. The Grove Press film collection was donated to the Harvard Film Archive.

In the years following, Rosset continued to publish the *Evergreen Review* and remained a fierce proponent of talented young authors and of course, freedom of speech. In 2007, he married Astrid Myers, the managing editor of the *Review*. In 2011, he licensed his films including *Film by Samuel Beckett* and *Strange Victory* to Milestone. His very last interview was for Ross Lipman's *Notfilm*, which Milestone will release later in 2015.

Rosset died on February 21, 2012, leaving behind a triumphant career of publishing groundbreaking work and a legacy of fighting the good fight against all censorship.

Production

Rosset was looking for his first project when General Films gave him *Candle in the Wind*, written by a professor at Antioch College who had developed the outline and chosen the broad topics to be addressed in the film. Rosset took the project when he left General and began Target Films as an independent venture. The original outline of *Strange Victory* was “unfilmable” according to Rosset, but he made some revisions and began looking for a director and editor. He met Hurwitz through his then fiancée and placed his trust in the leftist director because of Hurwitz’s association with Nykino and his previous directorial achievements, including *Native Land*. There was a plethora of budding filmmakers seeking projects and employment in this tremendously competitive industry and from this group came Howard Turner, the film’s future production manager.

After assembling preliminary crew came the daunting task of sifting through stock footage to select segments to be used in the film. *Strange Victory* adhered to traditional documentary format while also completely deviating from the norm. Although Hurwitz mostly used footage from World War II and the return of the troops after the war, he also staged parts of the film.

The expansion of the film from a twenty-minute short was Hurwitz’s doing. In his autobiography, Rosset stated that the day before the film’s release in New York, Rosset had another renowned filmmaker, Sidney Meyers, come in to cut down the theatrical print by twenty minutes. This story may be apocryphal, but if true, the amount of footage removed is likely exaggerated. Eleanor Burlingham, Hurwitz’s widow, his colleague Manfred Kirchheimer, and his son, Tom, are dubious that this edit ever took place and if it did, Leo would undoubtedly have overseen Meyers’s work. Either way, the 64-minute version held in the Rosset Collection at Columbia University is consistent with all the other material found both in the Hurwitz Collection at the George Eastman House and at the Library of Congress.

In 1964, Hurwitz returned to the film to create an addendum, an approximately 7-minute epilogue featuring Dr. Martin Luther King’s March on Washington. Hurwitz later decided that the addition did not improve the film and asked that it not be included in all future versions.

The production crew on *Strange Victory*



Saul Levitt, screenwriter (1911–1977) was an American playwright best known for his stage and screen versions of “The Andersonville Trial.” Levitt was blacklisted for a time and was uncredited on the screenplay for *The True Glory* (1945). He also wrote the screenplay for Lamont Johnson’s *A Covenant with Death* (1967), and adapted Daniel Berrigan’s play *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* into the 1972 film produced by Gregory Peck.

Faith Elliott, editor (1924–2001) is best known for her career as an animator under the name Faith Hubley. After working in the New York theater and in Hollywood as a sound-effects and music editor, script clerk, script supervisor, and editor, she married John Hubley in 1955. Her new husband was a union activist who had quit the Disney Company during a bitter strike and the couple was blacklisted from the film industry. Working together, the Hubleys created independent animation which placed an emphasis on music (several were collaborations with noted musicians including Dizzy Gillespie and Herb



Alpert). Their films won three Academy Awards—in 1959, 1962, and 1966. The couple also worked in television and were early contributors to “Sesame Street.” After John’s death in 1977, Faith continued to animate and her solo films, combining watercolor paintings with cel animation, often dealt in a poetic way with the treatment of women, myth, art, and nature and were honored at the Venice, Cannes and Annecy film festivals.



Mavis Lyons, *editor* (1916–2001) worked for most of her career under the name Mavis Lyons Smull and is credited as a researcher and editor on such groundbreaking television projects as “Homefront USA,” “Vietnam: a Television History,” and “The American Experience” and films *Being Different* and *The Immigrant Experience: The Long Journey*. Born in New York City in 1916, she she traveled to the then-Soviet Union as a photographer in 1935. After living in Mexico for two years, she returned to New York as a professional photographer. There, Lyons met her first husband, Eliot Elisofon, the *Life* photographer.

After the outbreak of World War II, she worked with the Office of War Information in London as a film editor, a profession she continued for the rest of her life. In London, she met her second husband, Jean Lenauer, film editor and critic. In 1978, she and her husband William Smull, the architect, moved to Boston where she worked at WGBH. She was an officer and active member of the Motion Picture Editors Guild.



David Leo Diamond, *composer* (1915–2005) was a serious classical composer who studied at the Eastman School of music, in New York City and in Paris. His compositions include symphonies, concertos, string quartets, music for wind ensemble, chamber music, piano pieces, and vocal music. Diamond also composed the musical theme heard on the CBS Radio Network broadcast “Hear It Now” and its TV successor, “See It Now.” Diamond was openly gay and believed that his career was slowed by homophobia and anti-Semitism. Diamond was awarded the American National Medal of the Arts in 1995 by the National Endowment of the Arts in

Washington D.C. and just three weeks before he died, he was honored with the Juilliard Medal at the 100th commencement ceremony of The Juilliard School, which had previously awarded him an honorary Doctor of Music degree in 1998. Leonard Bernstein recommended Diamond to Leo Hurwitz for the score of *Strange Victory* because he too busy to take on the task of writing it himself.

George Jacobson, *cinematographer and hidden camera operator* was also production manager on Paul Strand and Leo Hurwitz’s film *Native Land*.

Strange Victory's cast members

Alfred Drake, *narrator* (1914–1992) is best known for his leading roles in the Broadway productions of “Oklahoma” and “Kiss Me, Kate” and for playing Marshall Blackstone in the original production of “Babes in Arms,” and Hajj in “Kismet,” for which he received a Tony. He was also a Shakespearean, notably starring opposite Katharine Hepburn in “Much Ado About Nothing.” He starred in only one film, *Tars and Spars*, but played several roles on television. Drake played the President of the Stock Exchange in the film *Trading Places*. He was inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame and was also an author and playwright.



Muriel Smith, *narrator* (1923–1985) was an African-American singer. In the 1940s and 1950s, she was a star of musical theater and opera and was also the off-film ghost singer in several hit movies. Smith was born in New York and appeared on the popular radio series “Major Bowes’ Amateur Hour” in 1937. After singing at a party in 1939, one of the guests, Elizabeth Westmoreland, arranged a scholarship for her at the Curtis Institute of Music. She worked in a factory, earning \$15 per week, to support herself during her studies and graduated in 1946, in the same class as Leonard Bernstein and Isaac Stern.

She made her Broadway debut in 1943 in “Carmen Jones,” with an all-black cast. The musical ran on Broadway for 14 months. She appeared in Marc Blitzstein’s opera “The Cradle Will Rock,” and performed with the American Negro Theatre. On screen, she appeared in John Huston’s *Moulin Rouge* in 1952. Smith was the

uncredited voice for two songs in the 1958 *South Pacific*. In 1959, she turned down an on-screen part in the film *Porgy and Bess*, saying “It doesn’t do the right thing for my people.” After leaving show business, she worked for Moral Re-Armament and as a voice teacher. In 1984 she received an arts award from the National Council of Negro Women.



Gary Merrill, *narrator* (1915–1990) began his acting career in the late 1930s at several regional theaters and played in a 1939 Broadway comedy, “See My Lawyer.” During his four years in the Army in World War II, he appeared in Irving Berlin’s “This Is the Army” and in the stage and screen versions of Moss Hart’s “Winged Victory” (1944). He was also assigned to an Army Air Forces Radio unit, which led to roles in many radio dramas after the war. Through a recommendation from Hart, Merrill was cast as a young, liberal reporter in Garson Kanin’s 1945 comedy “Born Yesterday.” He was signed by 20th Century Fox in 1949 and played leading roles in two 1950 movies, *Twelve O’Clock High* and opposite future wife Bette Davis in *All About Eve*.

During their frequently stormy 10-year marriage, Merrill and Davis adopted two children and appeared together in several films. After their divorce, Mr. Merrill had a long, much-publicized relationship with Rita Hayworth that he chronicled in a 1989 autobiography called *Bette, Rita and the Rest of My Life*. Between the 1950s and 1970s, Mr. Merrill appeared in many films and narrated television documentaries. Long active in liberal causes, he helped rejuvenate Maine’s Democratic Party by actively supporting Edmund S. Muskie’s successful 1953 bid for governor, and participated in the 1965 civil-rights march from Selma to Montgomery. But because of his disillusionment with the Johnson Administration’s policies in Vietnam, he switched parties. In 1968, he ran an unsuccessful primary campaign as an antiwar, environmental candidate for one of Maine’s Congressional seats.

Sophie Maslow (1911–2006) was an American choreographer, modern dancer and teacher, and founding member of the New Dance Group. She trained with Martha Graham and Louis Horst and joined Graham’s Company in 1931. She created her own dance troupe, The Sophie Maslow Dance Company and, with Leo Hurwitz’s wife Jane Dudley and William Bales, established the Dudley-Maslow-Bales Trio in 1942. Maslow was a founding member of the American Dance Festival and the New York City Center Dance Theater. She was married to Ben (Max) Blatt and the couple had one daughter, Abigail. The Jewish Women’s Archive describes Maslow’s work as a blend of “classical, modern, and folk traditions [that] drew inspiration from politics and modern folk music to create vibrant new pieces that engaged audiences in new ways.” In *Strange Victory*, she plays a pregnant mother seated on a park bench.



Robert P. Donley (1911-2004) worked mostly under the stage name of Robert Donley. Although his role in *Strange Victory* (as an employer who refuses to hire blacks) was a small one, the actor went on to have a long career in television and radio, including appearances on the “Philco-Goodyear Television Playhouse,” “Kojak,” “The Rockford Files,” “Matlock” and in the 1988 Tom Cruise film, *Cocktail*.

Actor Cathey McGregor
 Actor Jack Henderson



Virgil Richardson
(December 14, 1916–February 21, 2012)

Virgil Richardson, the actor who played the black veteran pilot seeking a job in post-WWII America, was a man who lived up to his role in *Strange Victory*. Blazing his own trail through the twentieth century, he became a cofounder of Harlem's American Negro Theater and a radio personality at WNEW in New York City, a WWII Tuskegee Airman, and an expatriate for most of his later life. During his years in Mexico, Richardson worked as a film dubber, teacher and writer. He developed an instructional aid for students of Spanish and English that was used throughout Mexico City. In fact, it was while researching the history of the black expat community in Mexico that author (and George Washington University dean) Ben Vinson III first encountered Richardson. Vinson went on to chronicle the life of this remarkable man in his biography *Flight: The Story of Virgil Richardson, a Tuskegee Airman in Mexico*.

Raised and educated in Texas, Richardson attended Wiley College and studied science, math, German and Latin. He had his first acting experience at Wiley, where his performance in "The Road to Damascus" attracted the attention of critic and editor V.F. Calverton. After graduation, Richardson set out for New York City to try his hand on the stage. He found acting work in WPA Theatre Project productions at the New Theatre in Harlem and worked as a clerk and high school teacher. Richardson was able to study drama with Nadya Romanov, a disciple of Stanislavski.

In 1940, writer Abram Hill and actor Frederick O'Neal cofounded the American Negro Theater in Harlem. Hill and O'Neal started the theater by assembling several of their theater friends, including Virgil Richardson. Drawing upon W.E.B. Dubois's belief that "African American theater should be by, about, for and near African Americans," the ANT was committed to creating roles for black actors that were neither stereotypical nor demeaning. Graduates of the theater include Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte.

In March 1941, when he was on the brink of success as a theater actor, Richardson was drafted into the army. After serving at several US bases, he applied to become an airman with the Army Air Corps, a better paying position. Eventually, Richardson was assigned to air cadet training in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1943 and later saw action above the battlefields of Europe. After returning to the US he studied law at New York University while working full time. Due to a series of personal and professional frustrations, Richardson decided to move to Mexico, where he encountered a society with a very different racial climate. While living there, Richardson appeared in the 1950s television series, *Sheena: Queen of the Jungle* and the 1960s, *Tarzan*.

Before 1941, no African American had served as a U.S. military pilot. In 1917, African-American men had tried to become aerial observers, but were rejected. Finally, in April 1939, Congress passed Appropriations Bill Public Law 18, containing an amendment designating funds for training African-American pilots. The War Department put money into funding civilian flight schools willing to train black Americans.

All the African American personnel in the Army Air Corps received their flight training in Alabama, earning them the nickname the “Tuskegee Airmen.” The Tuskegee Airmen were recruited into an Air Corps program that trained blacks to fly and maintain combat aircraft. President Roosevelt had overruled his top generals and ordered that such a program be created. For many of the men there, this was their opportunity to give themselves a step up so that they could work and provide for their families — to feel some type of equality.

Once that door opened, it allowed young African Americans to be able to learn new skills and hopefully build careers behind them. Nearly 1,000 fighter pilots trained as a segregated unit at an air base in Tuskegee. Not allowed to fight with their white counterparts, the Tuskegee Airmen distinguished themselves from the rest by painting the tails of their airplanes red, which led to them becoming known as the “Red Tails.” Richardson served as a second lieutenant in the “Fighting 99th,” the Air Corps’ first African American fighter squadron, which earned three distinguished unit citations during WWII. Overall, the Tuskegee Airmen set records in the air earning them 95 Distinguished Flying Crosses. During his service, Richardson flew 63 combat missions.

This African-American segregated unit was inactivated in July 1949 as a result of Executive Order 9981. EO 9981 abolished racial discrimination in the United States Armed Forces.

In 2007, President George W. Bush saluted the Tuskegee Airmen, six decades after they had completed their WWII missions and returned home to a segregated United States. Bush mentioned how “these men in our presence felt a special sense of urgency. They were fighting two wars. One was in Europe and the other took place in the hearts and minds of our citizens.” Three hundred airmen, widows, and other relatives were in attendance for the ceremony. The legendary black aviators received a Congressional Gold Medal — the most prestigious award that Congress bestows. Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi commented that the “the Tuskegee airmen left a segregated country to fight in a war, and unfortunately returned to one that was still segregated. Though Hitler was defeated, prejudice was not. ... Today we are trying to right that wrong.”

Distribution

To work on publicity for *Strange Victory*, Hurwitz suggested enlisting the help of Billy Friedberg, an advertising agent in New York who charged a weekly fee to promote the film. Friedberg did arrange for Hurwitz and Rosset to meet with *New York Times* film reporter Abe Wyler, but otherwise proved to be extremely ineffective. He repeatedly told Rosset that he was waiting for the “right moment” to release the “juicy” stories. As a result, *Strange Victory*’s release date was pushed back by several months and the film was finally press screened in summer of 1948. The reviews ranged from tepid to enthusiastic, but *Strange Victory* was unable to secure a major distributor.

Still hopeful, Rosset began looking to independent distributors. Siritzky International grudgingly agreed to release the film at the Ambassador, their theater on 49th Street. The film was relying heavily on pre-sales and a firm was hired to reach out to groups to buy blocks of tickets in advance. Although many organization leaders came to watch the film, the ticket sales were minimal. Observers critiqued the lack of publicity for *Strange Victory*. Friedberg’s plan of waiting had backfired.

The film’s opening weekend was abysmal. The Friday it opened was warm and people were reluctant to head indoors. Saturday brought competition from a popular baseball game (the Red Sox trounced the Yankees 7 to 2 at the stadium). Even Rosset said that he was more interested in the game than in his film. The few critics and reporters who screened the film at the Ambassador on Friday were mostly representatives of right-wing media outlets and wrote scathing reviews that associated *Strange Victory* with communism. Although there were a few positive reviews, these were not nearly enough to save the box office. In addition to its New York preview, the film was shown in Chicago to important local figures wrangled together by Rosset’s parents. Eventually, Rosset accepted that the film was a disaster.

Reviews for *Strange Victory*

Strange Victory was well received by the left-wing press and most reviewers commended the film for forcing audiences to acknowledge the hypocrisy of postwar American society. However, many also indicated that the film’s controversial themes might better be left untouched. Other critics found *Strange Victory* unpatriotic and the *New York Daily News*, wrote that “the voice of Stalin is behind every frame of the film.” In a time when the blacklist and McCarthyism were becoming accepted facts of American life, there was no worse label than the red flag of communism. The palpable tension present in reviews of *Strange Victory* was expected and wholly unsurprising. What is surprising, however, is its lack of popularity in later years, after the postwar patriotic sentiments had died down.

“In a documentary film the skeptics have no opportunity to cry ‘propaganda’ because the factual evidence is laid before them. It cannot be denied.”

—Filmfront

“Well done semi-documentary. Leo Hurwitz has accomplished a notable task in writing, directing and editing STRANGE VICTORY.”

—The Daily Film

“Target Films presents here an eloquent appeal for racial tolerance and a savage indictment of the Hitler brand of super-nationality.”

—Charles Franke, Motion Picture Daily

Restoring *Strange Victory*

Milestone Films licensed *Strange Victory* directly from producer Barney Rosset in 2011. Milestone then discovered that the relationship between the film's producer and director had not always been harmonious. It turned out that Hurwitz's materials on *Strange Victory* had been donated to the George Eastman House, which claimed to have the best existing materials. Meanwhile, the Rossett Collection had been donated to Columbia University. Fortunately, Milestone had a long relationship not only with the Eastman House but also with the Hurwitz estate's co-trustee, Manfred Kirchheimer.

Other projects delayed Milestone's work on the film, but by 2014, Milestone was able to get Columbia University and the George Eastman House to send their film elements to Metropolis Post for inspection and to create a 2K test scan of the first few minutes. It turned out the Eastman House material included a very beautiful 35mm negative created in 1963, most likely for Hurwitz's rerelease the next year. However, the big surprise was that Columbia University's 35mm "composite print" was actually the original 35mm nitrate fine grain master from 1948. It too was in excellent condition with very little if no shrinkage. After scanning the first few minutes of each version, it was obvious that the original nitrate material from Columbia University was a little sharper and with slightly better contrast — as would be expected from a previous generation of material.

The first job was scanning the nitrate 35mm fine grain, followed by the laborious task of digitally cleaning the dust and scratches that had accumulated over the years. Jack Rizzo's Metropolis Post did the work with colorist Jason Crump timing the material and Ian Bostick doing the cleaning. Rich Cutler Sound Design in New York restored the sound.

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Metropolis Post

Barney Rosset Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries
George Eastman House Film Archive

Milestone Film & Video – 2015 Silver Anniversary

“They care and they love movies.” —Martin Scorsese

Amy Heller and Dennis Doros launched Milestone in 1990 in their New York City one-bedroom apartment. Since then, the company has gained an international reputation for releasing restored classic cinema and films made by artists frequently under-represented in mainstream media. Thanks to the company’s work in rediscovering and releasing important films such as Charles Burnett’s *Killer of Sheep*, Kent Mackenzie’s *The Exiles*, Lionel Rogosin’s *On the Bowery*, Mikhail Kalatozov’s *I Am Cuba*, Marcel Ophuls’s *The Sorrow and the Pity*, the Mariposa Film Group’s *Word is Out*, Edward S. Curtis’ *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, and most recently, the films of Shirley Clarke, Milestone has long occupied a position as one of the country’s most influential independent distributors.

In 1995, Milestone received the first Special Archival Award from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I Am Cuba*. Manohla Dargis, then at the *LA Weekly*, chose Milestone as the 1999 “Indie Distributor of the Year” for its distribution of Takeshi Kitano’s *Hana-Bi*. In 2005, the National Society of Film Critics again awarded Milestone with a Film Heritage award, the International Film Seminars presented the company its prestigious Leo Award and the New York Film Critics Circle voted a Special Award “in honor of 15 years of restoring classic films.” In November 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission’s first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. Milestone and its sister label Milliarium Zero won Best Rediscovery from the Il Cinema Ritrovato DVD Awards for its release of *Winter Soldier* in 2006 and again in 2010 for *The Exiles*.

In 2008, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association chose to give its first Legacy of Cinema Award to Doros and Heller of Milestone Film & Video “for their tireless efforts on behalf of film restoration and preservation” and the Anthology Film Archive made them a Film Preservation honoree. In 2009, Dennis Doros was elected as one of the Directors of the Board of the Association of the Moving Image Archivists (the first distributor so honored) and established the organization’s press office in 2010. In 2011, Milestone was the first distributor ever chosen for two Film Heritage Awards in the same year by the National Society of Film Critics for their release of *On the Bowery* and *Word is Out*. The American Library Association also selected *Word is Out* for its Notable Videos for Adult, the first classic film ever so chosen.

In December 2012, Milestone became the first-ever two-time winner of the prestigious New York Film Critics’ Circle’s Special Award as well as recipient of another National Society of Film Critics Film Heritage Award — both in honor of “Project Shirley,” the work in restoring, preserving and distributing the films of iconoclast director Shirley Clarke. Important contemporary artists who have co-presented Milestone restorations include Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Barbara Kopple, Woody Allen, Steven Soderbergh, Thelma Schoonmaker, Jonathan Demme, Dustin Hoffman, Charles Burnett and Sherman Alexie.

“Milestone Film & Video is an art-film distributor that has released some of the most distinguished new movies (along with seldom-seen vintage movie classics) of the past decade.”

—Stephen Holden, New York Times

For Further Research

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