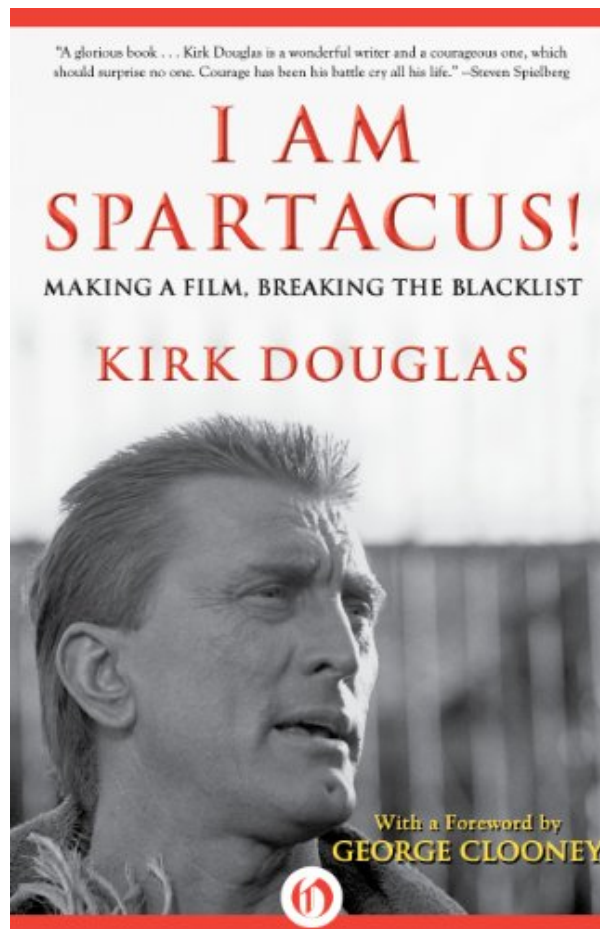


I AM SPARTACUS!: MAKING A FILM, BREAKING THE BLACKLIST BY KIRK DOUGLAS



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About the Author

Kirk Douglas is a renowned actor whose work on and off the screen has been rewarded by three Academy Award nominations, an Oscar for Lifetime Achievement, and the Medal of Freedom. Through his production company, Bryna, Douglas has produced acclaimed films such as *The Vikings*, *Lonely Are the Brave*, *Paths of Glory*, and *Seven Days in May*. He has penned ten novels and memoirs, including *The Ragman's Son* (1988). His 1960 epic, *Spartacus*, based on the Howard Fast novel of the same name, is credited with helping

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With a foreword by George Clooney: From Kirk Douglas, Hollywood royalty and bestselling author of *The Ragman's Son* and *My Stroke of Luck*, comes the candid story of the making of *Spartacus*, the blockbuster film that broke the blacklist. One of the world's most iconic movie stars, Kirk Douglas has distinguished himself as a producer, philanthropist, and author of ten works of fiction and memoir. Now, more than fifty years after the release of his enduring epic *Spartacus*, Douglas reveals the riveting drama behind the making of the legendary gladiator film. Douglas began producing the movie in the midst of the politically charged era when Hollywood's moguls refused to hire anyone accused of Communist sympathies. In a risky move, Douglas chose Dalton Trumbo, a blacklisted screenwriter, to write *Spartacus*. Trumbo was one of the "Unfriendly Ten," men who had gone to prison rather than testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee about their political affiliations. Douglas's source material was already a hot property, as the novel *Spartacus* was written by Howard Fast while he was in jail for defying HUAC. With the financial future of his young family at stake, Douglas plunged into a tumultuous production both on- and off-screen. As both producer and star of the film, he faced explosive moments with young director Stanley Kubrick, struggles with a leading lady, and negotiations with giant personalities, including Sir Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton, Peter Ustinov, and Lew Wasserman. Writing from his heart and from his own meticulously researched archives, Kirk Douglas, at ninety-five, looks back at his audacious decisions. He made the most expensive film of its era—but more importantly, his moral courage in giving public credit to Trumbo effectively ended the notorious Hollywood blacklist. A master storyteller, Douglas paints a vivid and often humorous portrait in *I Am Spartacus!* The book is enhanced by newly discovered period photography of the stars and filmmakers both on and off the set.

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63 of 65 people found the following review helpful.

I Am Spartacus!

By S Riaz

Kirk Douglas is now 95, but in this book he turns his memory back to 1959 when he decided to make the film "Spartacus". This is not simply a film memoir though, as interesting as that might be, because the film had an important and historic event attached to it - the fact a blacklisted writer was given screen credit under their own name for the first time since the fears of McCarthyism.

Dalton Trumbo was one of the most respected writers in Hollywood when he went to jail in 1947 for refusing to incriminate colleagues after he was brought before the House Un-American Activities Committee (actually before McCarthy, although that is the name best associated with the witch hunts that followed). While in another prison for similar reasons, author Howard Fast was writing the novel "Spartacus", which was later turned down by seven publishing houses as the author was blacklisted and which he ended up publishing it himself. When Dalton Trumbo was released he went to Mexico and was left having to write under assumed names.

This then is the story of Kirk Douglas discovering Howard Fast's novel and deciding that he wanted to make it into a movie. It is a tale as epic as the movie itself, as he fights a rival production, "The Gladiators", finds his cast (despite a less than enthusiastic Charles Laughton), has problems finding a leading lady, more problems finding a director, fights the censors and deals with the issues that using Dalton Trumbo as his screenplay writer causes. When Douglas decides to use Trumbo's real name on the movie credits he is the

first to end the Hollywood blacklist and it is here that the main story of the book is contained. This is a very interesting read by a man who has kindly shared his memories with us and whose brave actions gave back more than one person their career. It was personally important to Dalton Trumbo, but it was an event that changed Hollywood and the film industry, which had been mired in a time of fear of paranoia since the 1940's. Lastly, I read the kindle edition of this book and it contained the illustrations.

26 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

A Hollywood Hero

By Kindle Customer

This wonderfully written memoir focuses on the making of an epic film at a crossroads of American history, when the political excesses of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his anti-communist witch hunts destroyed lives and left a dark cloud of secrecy, betrayal, and fear hanging over the film industry.

Dalton Trumbo, who had gone to prison for no real crime, had for ten years been unable to work under his own name, or even for the kind of money his fame and skill should have commanded. He was one of many who suffered similar fates, because in the political climate of the time, to recognize them professionally was to put your own career in danger. Kirk Douglas wanted to produce an epic film from a book by a blacklisted author, Howard Fast (a risky proposition in itself), and wanted Trumbo to write the screenplay. But to acknowledge the screenwriter's work--or even to allow rumors of it--was to risk losing his film, his income, his career.

What happened is no less than a Hollywood legend, told by the man at the center of it. Kirk Douglas is 95 years old, and has been acting, making films, and writing books for most of that time. This book beautifully details a watershed in his extraordinary life and in the life of film.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Easy n fun to read

By Mr. B

As I read this book, I mentally hear the words being spoken by Mr. Douglas. It is written as if he were sitting next to you after dinner and telling you about the "time" through which he lived. It is anecdotal in style with his reflections on each story he conveys. I have learned and shared with others little "factoids" of which I was not aware. I am not normally a "book person" 'cause I fall asleep too easily but this book is such easy reading, I have not conked out yet while reading it. Also, I am a stop n go reader and the content lends itself nicely to that quirk. Buy it, read it and enjoy it and yes, learn from it. Mr. Douglas conveys the ugliness of the McCarthy era and the blacklist it produced. I can't help but wonder what those blacklisted victims, whom were kept from earning a living because they were accused of being communist would say today, if they knew companies like Walmart and Apple have made their fortunes using real communists to earn "their" living. Thank you Mr. Douglas!

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