

'Gone With the Wind' and Hollywood's Racial Politics

Making *Gone With the Wind*, David O. Selznick discovered, meant dealing with fierce criticism from black newspapers and public officials.

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THROUGHOUT the late 1920s and early 1930s Margaret Mitchell, an Atlanta newspaperwoman, was writing a Civil War epic that she assumed no one would ever read. It had "precious little obscenity in it," she later told one correspondent, "no adultery and not a single degenerate, and I couldn't imagine a publisher being silly enough to buy it." Macmillan acquired the novel, however, and months before its publication, in 1936, the work was under consideration all over Hollywood. Opinion at Selznick International Pictures was divided: the story editor on the West Coast called the book "ponderous trash"; the story editor on the East Coast called it "absolutely magnificent." In the event, David O. Selznick bought *Gone With the Wind* for \$50,000. The book, a commercial and cultural phenomenon, sold a million copies during its first month in print. The motion picture, which opened sixty years ago this month, remains a testament to the Technicolor glory of the Hollywood studio system.

Gone With The Wind had not gone easily to the screen. From the adaptation of the novel and the casting of Scarlett O'Hara to the heated negotiations with censors over small and not-so-small matters in the film, Selznick International faced one problem after another. David Selznick met -- and solved -- most of them. One persisted, though, and reasserted itself on February 29, 1940. Late in the afternoon of that day Hattie McDaniel was dressing for the Academy Awards banquet. A nominee for Best Supporting Actress, for her role as Mammy, she was apparently the first black actor ever to compete for an Oscar. She may have been uneasy about protocol, for she was to dine at the Coconut Grove with her producer, Selznick, and the white stars of the picture, including Olivia de Havilland, also a nominee for Best Supporting Actress.

"We trust that discrimination and prejudice will be wiped away in the selection of the winner of this award," members of a national black sorority had written to Selznick International some weeks before, "for without Miss McDaniel, there

would be no *Gone With the Wind*." Selznick agreed -- or so he told his correspondents. He nonetheless saw the letter as evidence that the disheartening, long-running debate on *Gone With the Wind* was not yet over.

Even before 1938, when Selznick International identified what it called a "Negro Problem," black Americans had taken a strong interest in *Gone With the Wind*. The black press was the most consistent and perhaps the most influential of the studio's advisers on racial issues; others included black actors, national black organizations, and the movie industry's notorious Hays Office. These people and institutions lacked common goals, and, as the historian Thomas Cripps has written, they rarely spoke with one voice. Some opposed production and release of the picture; others hailed it as a fine showcase for black actors. That lack of consensus not only complicated the production for David Selznick, whose liberal instincts warred with his intention of producing *his* story of the Old South *his* way, but also made *Gone With the Wind* a barometer of American race relations in the 1930s and 1940s.

IN the fall of 1936, wringing his hands, Sidney Howard wondered why he had agreed to adapt *Gone With the Wind* for the screen. He had read and reread the novel, he wrote Selznick in early November, "and it is certainly quite a nut to crack." Two weeks later, from his home in rural Massachusetts, he wrote Margaret Mitchell that she had been too generous; her story was far more than he could compress into the two hours' screen time he was permitted. He would soldier on, of course, but he wanted her to read over his outline and to help out, especially with the black characters -- "the best written darkies, I do believe, in all literature," he wrote. "They are the only ones I have ever read which seemed to come through uncolored by white patronising."

Like many northern whites, Howard looked to southern whites as authorities on "black psychology." Mitchell wanted to reinforce the notion of southern expertise, because to her, the Hollywood South often looked like a cartoon. In *Wonder Bar* (1934), for instance, Al Jolson had blacked up for a musical number staged in a fantasyland of pork chops and watermelons. Mitchell expected no better in *Gone With the Wind*: "Three hundred massed Negro singers," she wrote in a letter to Kay Brown, Selznick's New York representative, "standing on Miss Pittypat's lawn waving their arms and singing 'Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home,' while Rhett drives up with the wagon."

But some readers had found Mitchell's treatment of race less a cartoon than a nightmare. She had, for example, depicted her leading black characters as content with slavery, uninterested in freedom. They often seemed more like pets than people. When Scarlett and Big Sam were reunited after the war, "his watermelon-pink tongue lapped out, his whole body wiggled, and his joyful contortions were as ludicrous as the gambolings of a mastiff." The "good" black characters both loved and needed the whites. Though Mammy was one of the strongest characters in the novel, she could not manage Tara after the war without the guidance of her white masters. Her mind was too simple, not yet fully evolved, as readers could infer from a description of her as she looked at the once-grand plantation, her face "sad with the uncomprehending sadness of a monkey's face."

Lacking the protection and moral schooling of whites, the "bad" blacks were an unruly lot. Mammy and Big Sam called them "niggers." Mitchell called them "black apes" who committed "outrages on women." Reconstruction brought out the worst in these characters. Passing through Shantytown one evening, Scarlett was attacked by "a squat black negro with shoulders and chest like a gorilla." He was "so close that she could smell the rank odor of him" as he ripped open her bodice and "fumbled between her breasts." The Ku Klux Klan, according to *Gone With the Wind*, was a "tragic necessity."

In treatments of the screenplay written throughout early 1937, Sidney Howard retained many of the incidents and much of the tone of Mitchell's southern romance. And in general, intent on fidelity to the novels he produced for the screen, Selznick was pleased. "One never knows what chemicals have gone to make up something that has appealed to millions of people," he wrote to Howard, or "how many seeming faults of construction have been part of the whole, and how much the balance would be offset by making changes ... in our innocence, or even in our ability."

On reflection, though, Selznick knew that he could go too far in his faithfulness to Mitchell's text. "I, for one, have no desire to produce any anti-Negro film," he wrote in an exhaustive, exhausting memorandum to the screenwriter. "In our picture I think we have to be awfully careful that the Negroes come out decidedly on the right side of the ledger, which I do not think should be difficult." The screenplay needed only a deletion here, an elision there, starting, he told Howard, with references to the Ku Klux Klan. "A group of men can go out to 'get' the

perpetrators of an attempted rape without having long white sheets over them and without having their membership in a society as a motive," Selznick wrote. About the words "darkies" and "niggers," which also appeared in the screenplay, the producer said nothing.

By the spring of 1937, spurred by memories of racism in black organizations on both coasts had written to Selznick International about *Gone With the Wind*. "We consider this work to be a glorification of the old rotten system of slavery, propaganda for race-hatreds and bigotry, and incitement of lynching," members of a Pittsburgh group wrote in a letter that, like other such correspondence, has rarely been cited, much less discussed, in popular histories of the picture. One studio official called such opinions "ridiculous," yet many blacks were convinced otherwise; they genuinely feared that what they saw as an "anti-Negro" novel would become an "anti-Negro" film. Selznick International meanwhile hastened to assure them that *no* movie company "intends to offer to the public material that is offensive or conducive to race prejudice."

Cautionary letters continued to arrive at the producer's Culver City offices well into 1938. An associate of the Conference of American Rabbis told Selznick that the novel, though it entertained readers, also excited a latent "anti-Negro antipathy." Selznick, the correspondent said, must not cater to the public's narrow-mindedness, in part because it was wrong and in part because he, David Selznick, like most of his Hollywood peers, was a Jew. Walter White, the secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, also wrote to the producer. He offered to send along a packet of well-researched papers that demonstrated Mitchell's biased presentation of Reconstruction. Better still, he suggested, the studio should employ "a person, preferably a Negro, who is qualified to check on possible errors of fact or interpretation."

Selznick responded warmly. He, too, was a member of a persecuted race, he told White, and was sensitive to minority peoples' opinions. Moreover, he intended to hire "a Negro of high standing to watch the entire treatment of the Negroes, the casting of the actors for these roles, the dialect that they use, etcetera, throughout the picture." Among the candidates, he confided, was Hall Johnson.

Johnson, the leader of the Hall Johnson Choir, had been in and around Hollywood for several years. His music graced *The Green Pastures*, and his singers, chained to

oars, had sung and acted in *Slave Ship*. He was precisely what White feared: an insider, likely to endorse whatever portrait of slavery the studio conceived. White wrote Selznick that he hoped for a scholar, perhaps someone from Howard University. There, for the moment, the matter rested.

THE casting of black roles in *Gone With the Wind* took place throughout late 1938. Selznick International scouted some actors by watching their previous films, others by attending their current onstage performances in Los Angeles. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, a black paper with national circulation, reported that one prominent actor (Clinton Rosamond) had not been considered because he was "'too polished'" for the parts. Others, according to a *Courier* correspondent, abased themselves during the auditions.

Picture yourselves standing before Producer David O. Selznick, Director George Cukor, and 26 members of the production staff, all white, and reading [a] script which contains the word "Nigger" several times. Well, approximately one hundred Negro actors did just that in competing for coveted roles in the picture while all their years of racial pride [were] being wafted away on the wings of a gust of 'Wind.'

Like Eleanor Roosevelt, though, who engineered a screen test for her cook, most black actors saw *GWTW* as an opportunity for renown. Hattie McDaniel even auditioned in "Mammy rags" that may have been borrowed from the studio wardrobe department; she, Oscar Polk, Butterfly McQueen, and the other black actors chosen for *GWTW* were pleased to have work, especially in what promised to be a major picture.

As the principal photography began, in early 1939, scrutiny by the black press increased. Eight years before, *The Pittsburgh Courier* had acquired thousands of signatures on a petition to bar from the airwaves. The *Courier* hoped for even wider support on *Gone With the Wind*. Using the screenplay's racial epithets as a battle cry, the paper threatened a letter-writing offensive and, if necessary, a boycott of the finished picture. Selznick was nonplussed. The movie industry's censors had ruled only that "nigger" "should *not* be put in the mouth of *white people*. In this connection you might want to give some consideration to the use of the word 'darkies.'" For once, Selznick agreed with the Hays Office; certainly, he thought, the black characters could use "nigger" among themselves. But the *Courier* was not

alone in its outrage.

The more strident *Los Angeles Sentinel* called for a boycott of "every other Selznick picture, present and future." "What's more," the paper continued, "let's start a campaign and find out whether or not some of those who oppose Hitler from a safe distance have courage enough to oppose race prejudice when it may hit them in their careers and in their pocketbooks." Again Selznick was baffled. Perhaps, he thought, he should hire a black agent as a public-relations liaison to the black community. Or perhaps he should simply have the legal department send harsh warning letters to reporters and others whose inflammatory comments threatened to injure the production.

Selznick had meanwhile chosen his technical advisers -- both white. Aware of the potential for political backlash, he asked Kay Brown to assure Walter White that "the only liberties we have taken with the book have been liberties to improve the Negro position in the picture and that we have the greatest friendship toward them and their cause." Moreover, he promised that his advisers would not allow the studio to "turn out a Hollywood or NY conception of the Negro." Whether Selznick, Brown, or the studio consultants understood the "Negro position" was uncertain. Susan Myrick, a *Macon Telegraph* reporter and a dialect coach for *GWTW*, was convinced that the atmosphere of the picture belonged to the black characters; accordingly, she intended to teach the black actors to speak like "the middle Georgia Negro of befo-de-wah days." However accurate, that accent would connote the poverty and ignorance of black people -- both the characters and, as White could easily have imagined, the actors who played them.

Kay Brown soon reported to Culver City on her meeting with Walter White. "Mr. White, honey chile, is a negro who by virtue of being white goes many places as a white," she wrote. "However, he does not sail under false colors and is well known in New York as a negro and promptly told me he was one during the first five minutes of the interview." Brown was charming, White was affable, and they parted friends; it was so merry a get-together that Brown hated to tell Selznick that White had asked for a copy of the screenplay.

White would have objected strenuously to "nigger," as Brown and Selznick must have known. Butterfly McQueen (Prissy) also apparently objected to the word, at least privately. "I was unhappy because it seemed so authentic," she later told a

Georgia newspaper. The antecedents for "it" were presumably the clothes, the accent, the deference to the white characters, and above all the use in the screenplay of "nigger" -- a word whose authenticity reminded her of a racial legacy she longed to forget. "I complained so much," she added, that Hattie McDaniel "warned me that Mr. Selznick would never give me another job." In fact McDaniel, too, had complained. According to *The Pittsburgh Courier*, she was "race-proud" and would never say the word "nigger." According to her biographer, Carlton Jackson, she also influenced her peers to make known their feelings about its use. Meanwhile, Joe Breen, the director of the Hays Office, was having second thoughts. A re-release of *The Birth of a Nation* was pending; because of that and reports of theater riots over use of the word "nigger" in a 1934 picture, Breen urged that *Gone With the Wind* delete all racial epithets.

Selznick wanted to retain the "Negro flavor" of the picture -- but to use "nigger" he would have to face down White, Breen, the black press, *and* his black actors. The actors, meeting privately with Victor Shapiro, the studio public-relations director, had expressed their anxiety over racial elements of the production yet agreed to play the slaves more or less as Margaret Mitchell and Sidney Howard had written them. In return, Shapiro vowed that they would not have to say "nigger." Selznick, with mixed feelings, honored Shapiro's promise. The words "darkies" and "inferiors" stayed in the screenplay -- but not "nigger."

For some, the elimination of "nigger" temporarily halted the war against *Gone With the Wind*. "This admission marks a victory for the *Pittsburgh Courier*," wrote the columnist Earl Morris, who had led the charge. Victory was sweet, too, as anyone could tell by the columnist's smile in the photograph taken of him at Selznick International; as a guest of the studio, he was shown looking over the revised script. No less eager to have friends in Hollywood, Walter White lent his name to a Selznick International form letter designed for blacks and others concerned about *GWTW*'s racial agenda. The text not only attributed the deletion of "nigger" to White but also touted the studio's portrayal of the chief black characters as "lovable, faithful, high-typed people -- so picturized that they can leave no impression but a very nice one."

THE atmosphere on the set appeared nice, very nice. One afternoon Hattie McDaniel entertained the cast and crew by humming and limp-stepping her way through "Old Folks at Home." As she turned and kicked and rolled her eyes, visitors

to the set reportedly "laughed [them]selves sick." Even Butterfly McQueen, who still wanted to distance herself from her role, masked her resentment and occasionally played to white expectations. Watching McQueen take direction early on, Susan Myrick told Margaret Mitchell that the actress was "'nigger' through and through."

Russell Birdwell, a Selznick International publicist, encouraged the "sepia players" (as the black press called them) to turn these cheerful faces to the public. The black actors of *Gone With the Wind*, he told Selznick, "should do by-line stories, which we would plant in their papers throughout the country." The news releases not only would be good for the actors, Birdwell said, but also would help to counter any future attacks on the picture in the black press. Selznick agreed.

Oscar Polk, who played Pork, contributed to Birdwell's campaign. "As a race we should be proud that we have risen so far above the status of our enslaved ancestors," he wrote in a letter to the weekly *Chicago Defender*. Moreover, he and his fellow *GWTW* black actors "should be glad to portray ourselves as we once were because in no other way can we so strikingly demonstrate how far we have come in so few years." The *Defender* (which *The Pittsburgh Courier* once called the "Chicago Surrender, World's Greatest Weakly") printed the letter. The *Courier*, too, was ballyhooing the black actors, and gradually -- again, for the moment -- acclaim for McDaniel and others eclipsed the admonitions that had been hurled at the production.

By late spring of 1939, as Selznick started watching rough-cuts of important sequences in *Gone With the Wind*, his excitement increased; his accomplishment, he thought, would surpass even that of D. W. Griffith in *The Birth of a Nation*. The yoking of the two films was apposite, as a memorandum from Selznick to his assistant, Val Lewton, made clear.

Increasingly I regret the loss of the better negroes being able to refer to themselves as niggers, and other uses of the word nigger by one negro talking about another. All the uses that I would have liked to have retained do nothing but glorify the negroes, and I can't believe that we were sound in having a blanket rule of this kind, nor can I believe that we would have offended any negroes if we had used the word 'nigger' with care; such as in references by Mammy, Pork, Big Sam, etc.

Lewton responded immediately. Yes, he conceded, the absence of the word "nigger" had cost the picture an ounce of dramatic punch and a pound of comic material. Since the company had promised the "negro societies" that the word would not be used, however, its restoration to the picture would cost Selznick his integrity. Selznick nonetheless continued to obsess over the question, as over much else in *Gone With the Wind*. He even ordered his script supervisor to comb the screenplay for places where Sidney Howard had used a line from Margaret Mitchell but had elided or employed a euphemism for "nigger."

Politics, not race, settled the question, as an examination of Hollywood archives shows. Selznick expected a tough fight with the censors over the word "damn" in Rhett Butler's curtain line. Concessions on "nigger," a word whose use Breen now adamantly opposed, might soften the Hays Office later on "damn" -- or so Selznick apparently reasoned. "About the word, 'niggers,'" the producer wrote his assistant. "Okay, we'll forget it."

BY late fall of 1939 *Gone With the Wind* had been shot, cut, and scored. "Frankly, my dear, I just don't care," Rhett Butler would say in prints of the film screened at previews. At the December 15 premiere in Atlanta, however, and at all screenings that followed, a Hays Office dispensation would allow him to curse. His "damn" would become news, as would the premiere itself; the free publicity it generated would help to build audiences -- white and black -- throughout the nation.

Black moviegoers' interest was high, as the studio could tell from the black press and even the daily mail. In November of 1939 a correspondent from Atlanta University had told Selznick that "your Negro Public" was just as eager as "your White Public" to receive the *GWTW* company. The writer hoped that Selznick would deny the "wholesale talk of forcing us to the back, during the parade so that we may not hinder other people who want to see their favorite Movie People." Among the favorites, perhaps chief among them, was "Hi-Hat Hattie" -- McDaniel's nickname on radio's *The Optimistic Do-Nuts Show*.

Selznick had planned to showcase the *GWTW* stars, black and white, who would arrive in Atlanta in style and appear briefly before or after the screening of the picture. He heard from a studio liaison in Georgia, however, that "Southerners would not care to have the Negro members of the cast" present. Selznick was

caught. He wanted nothing -- and certainly not racial tyranny -- to harm the potentially "enormous Negro audience" for the picture. He was nonetheless wary of offending southern whites' racial sensibilities.

Polling studio employees from below the Mason-Dixon line, Selznick learned that southerners were second to none in their affection for Negroes "in what they regard as their proper place." Atlantans would warmly receive Hattie McDaniel and Oscar Polk and the others when they appeared on the stage of the Loew's Grand Theatre -- but Atlantans would not dine with them, invite them to the Junior League Ball in honor of the other Hollywood visitors, or sit with them in an auditorium. And since the Grand was a whites-only theater, McDaniel and the other black "guests" would have no proper dressing rooms backstage, no proper places to enter and exit the theater, and no proper places to go to the bathroom. Selznick had lived with *Gone With the Wind* long enough to know a Lost Cause when he saw one. He acknowledged "the very delicate Southern attitude" toward black people and, regretfully, decided to feature only his white cast members in Atlanta.

To the astonishment of almost everyone, particularly Selznick, the interdiction of black actors had one more paragraph, until now a footnote to the history of *Gone With the Wind* and Jim Crow.

The printer's proof of the souvenir program for *Gone With the Wind* contained scene stills along with formal portraits of the stars of the film. On the front cover were pastel illustrations of Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara, on the back studio portraits of other actors, including Hattie McDaniel, not in character but as themselves. Selznick, who already envisioned an Academy Award nomination for McDaniel, believed that the actor merited a place in the program because she "gives a performance that, if merit alone ruled, would entitle her practically to costarring."

When the Atlanta studio liaison saw the proof, however, he was wary. The program could include Mammy, the actor in costume, he said, but highlighting McDaniel "might cause comment and might be a handle that someone could seize and use as a club." Selznick was initially amused; the man was "nuts concerning use of Negroes" in the program. Southerners on the Culver City lot agreed -- he was "completely cockeyed." Then again, Selznick thought, the studio was producing

not only a \$4 million epic but "the Greatest World Premiere in History!" Lest the latter harm the former, maybe he should "play it safe" and not, as his liaison had warned, provide "an opportunity for anyone else to make trouble." Less than a month before the premiere he ordered two editions of the program, one with McDaniel, one without. He brooded that the slight was unfair, putting him "on the spot of seeming ungrateful for what I honestly feel is one of the great supporting performances of all times."

THE Atlanta premiere -- from the separate telephone switchboard in the Selznicks' hotel suite to the rousing performance of the Ebenezer Baptist Church choir at the whites-only Junior League Ball -- was nonpareil. So were the reviews that followed, as *Gone With the Wind* made its way to Los Angeles, New York, and other major cities across America. "Mightiest achievement in the history of the motion picture," the *Hollywood Reporter* concluded, and most metropolitan dailies concurred. Reaction in the black press was often as enthusiastic. Several critics praised Hattie McDaniel for the moral force she brought to the witty, sympathetic character she played; indeed, the portrayal of Mammy's grief on the death of the Butlers' daughter, filmed in an uncut shot as McDaniel climbed the stairs with De Havilland, was at once heartrending and authentic. Other critics thought that Hollywood's *GWTW* had tempered the novel's southern chauvinism and, as one prominent black magazine noted, "eliminated practically all the offensive scenes and dialogue."

Not everyone agreed, and certainly not those who, early on, had hoped for no mention of "darkies," for slaves in rebellion, for indictments of Ku Klux Klan activity and southern lynch mobs. Carlton Moss, writing in the *Daily Worker*, sternly condemned the picture. "Sugar-smearred and blurred by a boresome Hollywood love story," he told readers, *Gone With the Wind* offered up a motley collection of flat black characters that insulted the black audience. Hattie McDaniel's Mammy was especially loathsome in her love for a family, the O'Haras, "that has helped to keep her people enchained for centuries." The reviewer for the *Chicago Defender* called *GWTW* a "weapon of terror against black America."

Black activists responded with actions as well as words. As *Gone With the Wind* opened in American cities throughout the early 1940s, organized blacks made signs and walked picket lines in front of box offices. "YOU'D BE SWEET TOO UNDER A WHIP!" read one placard outside a Washington theater. "*Gone With the*

Wind glorifies slavery" and "Negroes were never docile slaves," demonstrators shouted in Chicago. The police were on site, but the rally was peaceful. Not so in Brooklyn, where the line at the box office snaked around the Loew's Metropolitan. When the picketers began to weave in and out of the queue, the police moved them across the street from the theater. From there they continued to annoy the crowd. Eventually they stepped outside the blockade and started to bandy words with the police. According to the *New York Sun*, a seventeen-year-old black "swung like a cyclone" at a patrolman, "who took the gesture on the nose and in bad part." After the youth was arrested, his companions staged a "sit-down protest" to prolong their noisy demonstration against the picture.

Word of these incidents reached -- and touched -- David Selznick. "I like to think of myself as being a liberal," he told his business associate John Wharton in a long memorandum. Now, though, owing to the *Daily Worker* and those black papers whose censure had fostered the demonstrations, he feared that he would endure what D. W. Griffith had. Griffith had spent years trying to prove that he was not racist, and never succeeded. "I think that by our silence we may be giving the appearance of truth to the slanders," Selznick ruminated in that memorandum. He considered suing the *Worker*, but finally let Lillian Johnson and other black fans defend him. "I crossed a picket line," Johnson, a columnist, wrote in the *Gary American*, and "I wasn't sorry." Many other blacks followed her lead. By February of 1940, as the Academy Awards ceremony neared, even hostile voices in the black press had joined the rooting section for Hattie McDaniel.

On Oscar night, wearing an ermine stole over a blue gown, McDaniel arrived at the Ambassador Hotel and, like the other stars, entered to the cheers of movie fans black and white. For her and Selznick International the evening would be as radiant as the Oz of *The Wizard of Oz*, so magical that nothing could spoil it, not even a small band of demonstrators outside the hotel, protesting against the racism of *Gone With the Wind*. Inside the Coconut Grove, as McDaniel collected her Oscar, Clark Gable shook her hand and Vivien Leigh kissed her. At the podium, tearfully, she told the audience and newsreel cameras that she hoped to "always be a credit to my race." Black activists may have cringed.

BY late winter of 1940, when *Gone With the Wind* was in general release, newspapers were teeming with reports of the war and predictions that America would eventually be drawn in. Moviegoers attending *GWTW*, hearing the cannon

fire approaching Atlanta, seeing the city burn and the fields go fallow, may have understood Ashley Wilkes's melancholy. Ashley never recovered from *his* war. Too much had been lost, he said near the end of the picture -- not only lives but a way of life. Moviegoers sensitive to the advancement of the black cause no doubt bristled at Ashley's nostalgia for the days of "cavaliers and cotton fields" and, as Ashley says wistfully, "high, soft Negro laughter from the quarter." Soon, though, "Mammyism" would disappear from the screen and black performers like Dooley Wilson (*Casablanca*) and Leigh Whipper (*The Ox-Bow Incident*) would excel. A momentous era of civil-rights advances would follow. In retrospect the dialogue of African-Americans and Selznick International over *Gone With the Wind* seems a notable early landmark.

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