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# Dartmouth Daily Film Program

## GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT (1947)

Phil Green . . .	Gregory Peck	John Minify . . .	Albert Decker
Kathy . . . . .	Dorothy McGuire	Miss Wales . . .	June Havoc
Dave . . . . .	John Garfield	Jane . . . . .	Jane Wyman
Anne . . . . .	Celeste Holm	Tommy . . . . .	Dean Stockwell
Mrs. Green . .	Anne Revere	Prof. Lieberman .	Sam Jaffe

Based on the novel by Laura Z. Hobson    Screenplay by Moss Hart  
Photography by Arthur Miller    Edited by Harmon Jones    Music by Alfred Newman  
Directed by Elia Kazan    Produced by Darryl F. Zanuck  
A 20th Century-Fox Production

From the day it was released, GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT has stirred up a storm of controversy. It has been praised as a noble effort in examining the causes of anti-Semitism, and it has been dammed for supposedly encouraging anti-Semitism. It is therefore understandable why, up to this point, Hollywood had been extremely hesitant to examine the problem. Exceptions were DISRAELI (1929), HOUSE OF ROTHSCHILD (1934), and THE LIFE OF EMILE ZOLA (1937), all based on history and therefore supposedly safe from criticism, and some passages in wartime films dealing with Nazi persecution of the Jews.

But 1947 brought from another studio (RKO) an additional examination of anti-Semitism, CROSSFIRE. It is worth some space to discuss this film at the same time. CROSSFIRE is in many ways more impartial and the story is, at least to this writer, more interesting. In that film, a man is mysteriously murdered, and another man is held under suspicion. The district attorney has nothing to go on until he hears the suspect refer to the victim as a "Jew boy". A little later, the same man lets slip some further remarks on the same order. Slowly, the district attorney realizes that here is the sole motive for the murder: vicious and drunken hate. But the story becomes more complicated when intolerance becomes supported by personal loyalties, and the mood becomes one of sheer terror.

GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT attacks the problem with equal courage and understanding. Little is withheld, even at the risk of what will strike many viewers as overstatement and sentimentality. The story here concerns Philip Green, a magazine writer doing an article on the prevalence of anti-Semitism in America, who decides to pretend that he is a Jew. What he encounters in his office, his social group, and with the woman he loves, shocks and confuses him. He sets about trying to bring to public attention what he has learned through his experiences.



The success of GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT, which won "Oscars" (for what that's worth) for the best film, best direction, and best actress of 1947 is due mainly to the superb screenplay of the late Moss Hart (despite his weakness for sticky sentimentalism, a fault which to some extent rests with the original novel) and the direction of Elia Kazan. Mr. Kazan keeps the story taut, and the sequence of events is linked together with skill and great dramatic cohesion. His long interest in American social problems shows in his more recent films: EAST OF EDEN, A FACE IN THE CROWD, PANIC IN THE STREETS, VIVA ZAPATA! and WILD RIVER, among many notable pictures. And his cast is also unusually well chosen, although some of the acting is beginning to have a slight period flavor fifteen years after the film was made.

Since GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT and CROSSFIRE there have been numerous and perhaps far more polished essays in the field of cinematic journalism dealing with anti-Semitism, but it is important to remember that this recent trend started with these two films, and they should be respected for this, as well as for being excellent and often exciting entertainment.

David Stewart Hull