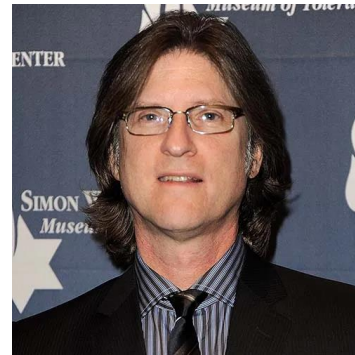


## **Oscar-Winning Documentarian Slams Writers Guild for “Lack of Courage and Moral Clarity” in Refusing to Condemn Hamas**

By Richard Trank, Writer/Director | Executive Producer, Moriah Films

Richard Trank asks, "How long will it take the WGA's current leadership on both coasts to come to a consensus that its silence in the face of the wanton slaughter of Jewish men, women and children by a terrorist organization is wrong?"

After more than two weeks of silence, Writers Guild of America West president Meredith Stiehm finally issued a statement on behalf of the union's board about the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7. While the WGAW has never had problems making statements about controversial issues, for some reason this particular writers room could not come to a "consensus" on the largest slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust.



Richard Trank  
Jason  
LaVeris/FilmMagic



The WGA West building Philip Cheung for The Washington Post/Getty Images

Fellow guilds like the DGA and SAG-AFTRA somehow were able to come to consensus to make clear statements on the issue of a terrorist organization reportedly decapitating babies, torturing and raping women, kidnapping elderly Holocaust survivors, parading and humiliating hostages and murdering some 1,400 people, including more than 260 young people enjoying a music festival during one of the most important Jewish religious holidays of the year. The major studios did not seem to have a problem coming to a consensus condemning this brutality. The Academy Museum canceled its annual gala on Oct. 14 because it didn't feel such an event was appropriate after the Hamas attack. And several hundred of the top names in Hollywood managed to get together to sign a letter denouncing Hamas and demanding they allow all of the hostages in Gaza to be freed. But a group of writers who pride themselves at figuring out in a room how to tackle the most complicated plot points were unable to reach "consensus?"

I am not a member of the Writers Guild. I was, for a time, a member of the WGAW's Non-Fiction Writers Caucus when it existed. I was nominated by the WGA for best documentary feature screenplay for a film I wrote, an accolade of which I have been very proud until now. My filmography has been focused on the history of the Holocaust, World War II and Israel. My interest in what is currently going on in Israel is not just professional. Much of my family is there, including a 21-year-old soldier and a 19-year-old in pre-army training. The 76-year-old father of a camera operator who has worked on several of my films is one of the hostages currently being held in Gaza — a man devoted to peace and coexistence who spent much of his time bringing in Gazans to Israel who needed medical help not available in the Hamas-controlled territory. Can the esteemed board of the WGAW explain to his family why it couldn't come to a "consensus" about a vicious terrorist attack?

Maybe the problem here isn't consensus. Possibly it's a lack of courage and moral clarity.

Back in the early 1950s, when the Red Scare was in full swing and tens and tens of writers were barred from working by the blacklist, the WGA's predecessor, the Screen Writers Guild, also had a serious problem coming to a consensus about speaking out. Ironically, many of these writers who weren't able to find work for years, along with fellow actors, directors, producers and crew, were Jews. It took decades for the WGA leadership to apologize for its silence, for its lack of courage and for the abnegation of its responsibility to protect its membership.

I wonder: how long will it take the WGA's current leadership on both coasts to come to a consensus that its silence in the face of the wanton slaughter of Jewish men, women and children by a terrorist organization is wrong? There is a quote which comes to mind here that was uttered not by a clever writer in a room, but by a pretty clever guy nonetheless, Albert Einstein: "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."

[Read online here](#)



**Stay Connected**



**Simon Wiesenthal Center**

1399 South Roxbury Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90035  
310.553.9036