

Victims of inevitable pity

[Law](#), [Constitution](#)



The United States of America is known for its stubborn pride, patriotism, and independence. Freedom was ingrained in the Constitution for religion, speech, and press. Yet autonomy can come at a high cost. Arthur Miller believed that freedom was a mental state achieved through persecution. His viewpoint is valid and has proven itself time and time again throughout history. Miller shares his belief with the public through *The Crucible*, a play about the Salem witch trials of 1692. Miller wrote the play so that his audience would draw parallels between Salem's unjust prosecution and the McCarthy era of the 1950s.

There are several occasions when hysteria has enveloped the United States and its citizens. Among the worst of these is the widespread fear and hatred of communism during the Cold War. Former Senator Joseph McCarthy made an unfounded assertion that 205 active members of the Communist Party infiltrated the U. S. Department of State. McCarthy's speech sent the country into devastating paranoia, allowing him to become the face of justice against communism. This led to McCarthy's appointment as chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Once given this position, McCarthy launched a hunt for communists infiltrating American society.

At first glance, Joseph McCarthy's actions appear courageous. Yet when one looks behind the curtain it is easy to see faults in his system. Since Senator McCarthy's paranoia had saturated the public's mind, citizens could exact revenge on their enemies by accusing them of participation in communism. Regardless of the truth, the accused lost everything they had; homes, work, and friends. Arthur Miller saw through the facade of justice and took matters into his own hands. He published *The Crucible* in 1953, and society was quick

to draw parallels between Salem and 1950s America. As soon as one cried ‘witch’ or ‘communist’ the accused’s lives shattered in the public eye. In the foreword of *The Crucible*, Miller explains why the cycle of accusation will continue. “When one rises above the individual villainy displayed, one can only pity them all, just as we shall be pitied someday. It is still impossible for man to organize his life without repression, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom.” (Miller 7)

Arguably, Miller saw through the villainy at hand during Senator McCarthy’s trials. This task may appear simple to our present society. In reality, during the era of these punitive and painful hearings, it was almost impossible to express yourself. A citizen’s ethnically diverse friend group or affinity for modern art could be used against them. Leftist political views were seen as threats, and the majority of Americans did not want to speak up for fear of being fired,

jailed, or blacklisted by the Senate. Thus readers must understand how difficult speaking out against McCarthyism was. Miller’s phrase ‘one can only pity them all’ infers that those who recognized McCarthyism’s horror would view the Senate’s delusion as pitiful.

Miller knew that his hatred of McCarthy’s methods was not in line with the majority of Americans’ views. His line “just as we shall be pitied someday,” is an indication of how future societies would view injustices of Miller’s time. He is aware that McCarthy’s trials will be looked back on with shame, as cultures often review mistakes made in the past. Miller executes the same thinking in *The Crucible*, as he reviews Salem’s unjust punishments. He

writes, “ The necessity of the Devil may become evident as a weapon, a weapon designed and used time and time again in every age to whip men into surrender.” (Miller 32) The weapons used to keep order in Salem were hanging and threats of the Devil. In the McCarthy Era, those devices were jail time and blacklisting – a tool that prohibited suspected communists from getting jobs.

It is painful to read the rest of Arthur Miller’s quote: “ It is still impossible for man to organize his life without repression, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom.” (Miller 7) This is the segment during which he refers to McCarthyism, saying that repression remained rampant during his life. Though Arthur Miller’s time on Earth has come to a close, his viewpoint on the balance between freedom and oppression applies to modern day.

‘ Out of sight, out of mind.’ It’s a mundane saying, oftentimes dedicated to organization or classwork. Yet it can also apply to the millions of deaths caused by America’s War on Terror. It is the longest conflict the United States has ever taken part in, and one of the most unjust. The United States captured Mohamedou Ould Slahi in 2002. Mohamedou had joined Al Qaeda in 1991. He did not hold any resentment against the United States, as he had joined to fight the Afghani communist government. After the government in Afghanistan was overthrown, Slahi severed all ties with Al Qaeda and attempted to live in peace. However, once he had been captured, Slahi remained imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay without charge for fifteen years. He was tortured and beaten. Knowing no English, Mohamedou could not

defend himself or proclaim his innocence. During Slahi's time at Guantanamo, guards took a liking to his kind presence and taught him English, which Slahi quickly picked up on. He wrote Guantanamo Diary, a testament to his unjust treatment. Slahi was innocent, so he was released from Guantanamo in 2016. The damage had been done. Slahi had gone through immense mental strain and missed his mother's funeral. Despite this, Mohamedou is glad to be home and have his story so well known. After all, it is a display of America's lack of blind justice. Mohamedou, a scholar from Mauritania, was never charged with a crime, despite being detained for over a decade.

Slahi remained in Guantanamo because America's justice system prosecuted in a blind manner. Modern day America is performing a witch hunt – searching for convictions to justify the war on terror. The government did not fight for Slahi's justice, either. Guards began protesting Slahi's imprisonment, but he was not removed from Guantanamo. The American prison system could not admit its own mistake. This modern example is in line with Miller's belief that “ It is still impossible for man to organize his life without repression, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom.” (Miller 7) After terror attacks such as 9/11 and the San Bernadino massacre, many people in the United States called for arrests. In order to gain favor with these voters, politicians began to push for tougher sentences for suspected terrorists. The judicial system began doling out these punishments, creating an organizational system that heavily repressed freedoms of those from the Middle East.