
Mass Hysteria Destroys Lives

Meghan Markle is continuously persecuted by the media and made into a scapegoat. Megan Walker compares the severe harassment of our contemporary society and how it is represented in the Salem Witch Hunts in Miller's historical drama, *The Crucible*.

Persecution victimises specific groups and people based on their race, gender, religious beliefs, economic or political status and treats these people with hostility and aggression. Media have made a scapegoat of Meghan Markle. Stereotypes and labels have forced Meghan into a certain way of living throughout her role in the royal family. Both race, economic status and gender have been factors of her persecution in contemporary society. Likewise, John Proctor is persecuted for his socially unacceptable actions in the Salem Witch Trials in Miller's historical novel, *The Crucible*.

American playwright Arthur Miller was inspired by the 1950s 'Red Scare' which led to his play, *The Crucible* in 1951. *The Crucible* was written as an allegory for McCarthyism, during the time the Government of the USA was persecuting people that were suspected of being communists.

Compellingly, his somewhat fictionalised play encapsulates the Salem Witch hunts in Massachusetts from 1692 – 1693 and how many were scapegoated and victimised, similar to John Proctor.

Interestingly, in modern society, the nasty habit of scapegoating is still alive in our community today. Especially in the royalists. A royal member states, "The level of deceit has been staggering and everyone from the top of the royal household to the bottom feels like they have been stabbed in the back."

Meghan Markle does not fit the 'perfect' stereotype; therefore, she is being blatantly oppressed by the royal family. Her decision to step back from their royal duties has caused havoc among many of the royal family members and monarchists.

Additionally, Meghan Markle is being victimised since she is a woman of colour. She shouldn't receive such hostility for her differences. Don't you agree? A reporter stated that her mother was 'from the wrong side of the tracks' due to her African American heritage which is atrocious. Race, gender, political and economic status must not be used as reasons for persecution.

However, persecution does usually occur to people who are marginalised in society or act out of the normal stereotype. John Proctor, the tragic hero in the play is targeted since he refused to give out names of communists during the McCarthy era. Mass Hysteria was spread through people's fear and often random names were used to get out of the Courtroom's persecution during the Salem Witch Trials. Moreover, Miller wrote *The Crucible* through his perspective since he was unfairly victimised for the same reason as Proctor.

Citizens' false accusations are often the major cause of mass hysteria as displayed in Miller's historical drama. Continuously, mass hysteria is an issue as the media significantly exaggerates

different scenarios. Yet civilisation also contributes to the hysteria by spreading lies and following the crowd. Meghan was once loved by the public until the royalists and the media harassed her. The citizens were also like 'sheep' adding on to this insanity. Tabloids spread various lies stated by royal family members as stated in Amanda Harding's article, 2018 to keep their social status. As one example of this, they continue to persecute Meghan Markle for absurd reasons like the fact she does not fit the socially acceptable role. Even Markle's friends are adding fuel to the fire. One of them states, "With Meghan, it's always been her way or the highway ... Meghan likes to flee when things get heavy and observe from afar what she has done." Considering Markle's 'out of the norm' actions many have perceived her actions as a 'bad' thing and as a result she has become the royal family scapegoat and the 'brunt of public scorn' as Kourtnee Jackson identified in her 2019 Article.

Similarly, in *The Crucible* many are incriminated due to Abigail's insane and false accusations. Due to the theocratic government during the Salem witch trials, all accused members lives were entirely dependent on the religious administrators' decisions since the Church and the state were one at the time. However major decisions were usually based on what they heard about certain people. The higher the social status one had, the more likely one was to be believed. Parris states, "Then you were conjuring spirits last night."

Abigail: "Not I, sir, not I. Tituba and Ruth." (P 10, *The Crucible*) Dramatic tension is revealed in this emotive language since it displays Abigail's actions against the citizens of the Puritan community. Miller's character Abigail is structured in a way to make her seem 'evil' and 'toxic' by her sadistic actions. Abigail acted out against many citizens therefore they were victimised in the Salem Witch Hunt. She mainly persecuted John Proctor due to his and her affair which was forbidden at the time.

Miller structured Abigail in a way that she would have prejudiced characteristics. This can be paralleled to royal family and how they made a scapegoat of Meghan Markle. Although she may not fit the stereotype she should not be persecuted for her differences. Consequently, Markle has been blamed for the feud between her husband, Prince Harry and his brother Prince William. Markle has been made out to be an 'enemy of her husband's relationship with his brother, Prince William.' She is believed to be the cause of all of Harry's 'unacceptable' actions such as him stepping back from his royal position in the royal family. Many are deeply upset with Meghan Markle and the Prince of Wales and Duke of Cambridge are 'incandescent with rage,' therefore she is being persecuted by both the media and the royals as a result of her socially unacceptable actions.

Persecution relies on a particular group and social status to exterminate, drive away, or overpower people they have something against, and this is what Markle is being faced with. Miller's historical drama *The Crucible* parallels contemporary society and the issues we are exposed to. Persecution is a constant issue that continues to rear its ugly head in our community. Due to race, gender, religious beliefs, political or economic status, many are persecuted and made a scapegoat like Meghan Markle, just because of their differences. This conveys how people of lower status who are marginalised in our civilisation are targeted. The media greatly exaggerates situations like these, and often mass hysteria is created. Additionally, many are severely harassed for reasons such as iniquitous prejudice. Voltaire sums this up quite nicely stating, "Our wretched species is so made that those who walk on the well-trodden path always throw stones at those who are showing a new road."