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American MASTERS

August 23rd, 2006

Arthur Miller McCarthyism



Sen. Joseph McCarthy

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s America was overwhelmed with concerns about the threat of communism growing in Eastern Europe and China. Capitalizing on those concerns, a young Senator named Joseph McCarthy made a public accusation that more than two hundred “card-carrying” communists had infiltrated the United States government. Though eventually his accusations were proven to be untrue, and he was censured by the Senate for unbecoming conduct, his zealous campaigning ushered in one of the most repressive times in 20th-century American politics.

While the House Un-American Activities Committee had been formed in 1938 as an anti-Communist organ, McCarthy’s accusations heightened the political tensions of the times. Known as McCarthyism, the paranoid hunt for infiltrators was notoriously difficult on writers and entertainers, many of whom were labeled communist sympathizers and were unable to continue working. Some had their passports taken away, while others were jailed for refusing to give the names of other communists. The trials, which were well publicized, could often destroy a career with a single unsubstantiated accusation. Among those well-known artists accused of communist sympathies or called before the committee were Dashiell Hammett, Waldo Salt, Lillian Hellman, Lena Horne, Paul Robeson, Elia Kazan, Arthur Miller, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Charlie Chaplin and Group Theatre members Clifford Odets, Elia Kazan, and Stella Adler. In all, three hundred and twenty artists were blacklisted, and for many of them this meant the end of exceptional and promising careers.

During this time there were few in the press willing to stand up against McCarthy and the anti-Communist machine.

Among those few were comedian [Mort Sahl](#), and journalist [Edward R. Murrow](#), whose strong criticisms of McCarthy are often cited as playing an important role in his eventual removal from power. By 1954, the fervor had died down and many actors and writers were able to return to work. Though relatively short, these proceedings remain one of the most shameful moments in modern U.S. history.

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146 Comments American Masters (PBS)

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hannah montana · 6 years ago

I love Hannah Montana

266 ^ | v · Share



megan · 5 years ago

what was the relationship between Joesph mccarthy and arther miller?

62 ^ | v · Share



aqua · 5 years ago

there is a strong comparison between mccartyism and the written play the crucible because both circle around two smiliar aspects, false accusations and fear

83 ^ | v · Share



gigi · 5 years ago

oh and Mr. Russelmen, id just like to say to u that u have a poor outlook on humanity and in fact u are mistaken in the part where u said that Joe McCarthy couldnt be in the (HUAC) because anyone who took civics as a freshman or knows anything about the Senate, knows that not only does House of Reprs have comittees but the "SENATE" does also, u cant expect 200 people to push an agenda at the same time, so all the people who have similar political agendas form committees to make ideas ,to make their ideas pass, House is another name for commitee. And if you had done any research on any infamous communist leaders, Chairman Mao or Joesph Stalin for instance,(two of the most famous communist leaders in history) you would know that they did not come from "ELITES", they came from working class people, the poorest of the working class people in fact. You think u are very clever with your german words and your "knowledge". The government does control public school, how else do u expect for everyone to get educated? I hope you would not like to educate them, because u need to get your facts straight. In a communist country, there is no other option for a child but public education, but in the US u may enroll your child in private school if u find the public education system lax, in fact there are tax breaks for people who enroll children in private school if they cannot afford it, the govt gives us plenty of options (for now) on education. Sure Karl Marx may have believed that public education was a good idea and included it in his writings, but that doesnt neccessarily mean he came up with it. If you had read "80%" of the comments u would realize that most of us are on this site

see more

34 ^ | v · Share



mrs. jonas · 6 years ago

I LOVE THE JONAS BROTHERS!!! :)

19 ^ | v · Share ›



angelica · 6 years ago

hmmm... so when r we going to get a mexican president ??????

15 ^ | v · Share ›



gigi · 5 years ago

i think its funny how McCarthy and Communists BOTH seem to hate expression and were all for censorship, i mean chairman mao of communist china did the same thing, suppressing the writings of intellectuals of his time, calling them capitolist, he certainly censored more violently than McCarthy, (tiannamen square massacre and the Red Guard- a country spread gang of young boys who were famous for their violence and vandalism the most famous incident being "The Rape of Nanjing" who were in fact "unofficially" approved by Chairman Mao as an attempt to squash out anything that might show someone that might think different him, that people were able to think differently than him. But, McCarthy censored things as well, he is supposedly against communism and for american capitulism, but then "to wipe out communism" he calls all the people against him communists, because he knew it would scare people and make them act hastily without looking for all the facts, he was smart in that aspect. Arthur Miller was obviously not communist because if he were he would believe that everyone should think the same about everything, which he didnt, as shown in the crucible. socialism, marxism, and communism all sound very good in theory, but in the end they dont work very well bc it gives to much power to a select group of people or person. It gives all the power to the govt. McCarthy took advantage of the people's fear and blatantly slandered authors, that disagreed with him with no proof that they were communist just for his own political gain. He was just a dishonest person. Personally, I think making everyone equal in every aspect is a mistake, because some people work harder than

see more

19 ^ | v · Share ›



Hana · 5 years ago

McCarthy's ears and eyebrows were seriously freak-ish.

18 ^ | v · Share ›



James · 5 years ago

People generally think that McCarthy was wrong, well I got news for you all. One of the senators he was accusing turned out to be a communist spy. I wonder how many others were really working for the Russians.

21 ^ | v · Share ›



Keda · 5 years ago

Hey :) I'm in class. This is a GREAT subject for our lit class! Thanks ALOT!!! Yay!

16 ^ | v · Share ›



Saruhhhh · 6 years ago



hahaha I LOVE all these comments. yall are some crazy people. im doing a project for my english class and its gonna suck. I plan on doing it the night before, and need someone to do it for me? any takers?? :]

8 ^ | v · Share ›



james · 5 years ago

whats worse is our country now is turning to socialism

18 ^ | v · Share ›



Dre · 5 years ago

James, one person being a communist dose not justify the other people whos lives he ruined to satisfy himself

11 ^ | v · Share ›



Jesse Balogh · 5 years ago

I loved "The Crucible" I liked how Arthor Miller tied the Witch Trials and McCarthyism together that makes it so much more interesting.

7 ^ | v · Share ›



caitlin forsyth · 6 years ago

hey...does anyone know how i can cite this source??

thanks

7 ^ | v · Share ›



sorakazami · 6 years ago

a lot of people see parallels between McCarthyism, the Salem witch hunts and trials, and post 9/11 attitudes

7 ^ | v · Share ›



jese · 5 years ago

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet...> this has more

6 ^ | v · Share ›



sorakazami · 6 years ago

i think that McCarthy is one of the biggest idiots in modern American history but that's just my opinion.

5 ^ | v · Share ›



ihatehim · 6 years ago

He had no right to do what he did i did a biography of him for school and he is a idiotic man and people in america too, it reminded me of salem witch trials i mean was it actually LAND OF THE FREE? when they did this they took the right away and the salem witch trials was the same excat thing what an idiot except they didnt hang people they jjust shot them big difference NOT people still died

4 ^ | v · Share ›



chuck · 6 years ago

this is amazing i love it with all my heart and soul.
and most you people need to learn how to spell.

4 ^ | v · Share ›



ABC · 6 years ago

This thing abt MCarthyism is reflected also in Miller's play 'A view from the bridge'. It deals with the idea of betrayal (like that Joseph guy snitched on the communist and stuff). A character informs the American immigration about Italian illegal immigrants in the community

4 ^ | v · Share ›



Walrusman007 · 6 years ago

great topic

4 ^ | v · Share ›



Sally Counsel · 6 years ago

Actually, Sen McCarthy's claims have now be proven correct through the Venona papers. Please update this information.

6 ^ | v · Share ›



Phoenix Pest Control · 5 years ago

Just to make you aware:

The development of the Phoenix AZ region, has inspired the construction of homes, estates and businesses; and unintentionally created an oasis for pests. Readily available food and water, contribute to the growth, development and spread of Phoenix pest control problems. As a result, the proliferation of Phoenix pest control problems like the Fire Ant, Scorpion and Black Widow Spider; have caused more damage to real estate in the United States, than fires and storms combined.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



Raheem · 5 years ago

McCarthyism isn't as big of a deal as people think. The play by Authur Miller just made it seem that way. Truth is it was one idiot who decided to randomly accuse political officials of communism to advance his own career as a politician. It back fired on him eventually. Just like the first Red Scare this just helped prompt the second one. In fact everyone during the Cold War was an idiot. Just go to google and look up "Duck and Cover" you'll see what I'm talking about.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



Martin · 5 years ago

Wow! what a devious way to conceal your disdain for those willing to speak their minds.... and exercise racism without it being seen as just that.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



valic · 6 years ago



McCarthyism was one of the scariest times in America. People were very afraid of getting "labeled" a communist. This just shows what fear can do to a nation when left uncontrolled. Thank god for Edward Murrow, who knows what the world would be like now!

3 ^ | v · Share ›



John · 6 years ago

.....republicans...*sigh*....

3 ^ | v · Share ›



jordan · 6 years ago

this is well interesting and im not into all this history but it is pretty interesting, some of this is going to my essay !

3 ^ | v · Share ›



Chris Langdon · 5 years ago

You people are being brainwashed. If you want the truth about "McCarthyism" you might read "The Venona Secrets" by Romerstein and Breindel, "McCarthy and His Enemy" by Buckley and Bozell. The truth is there were hundreds of Communists in the American government in the 30's, 40's and 50's. Of course, if you put the truth in a term paper, your teacher will probably flunk you.

6 ^ | v · Share ›



Bernard M. Russelman · 6 years ago

If you read 80% of the brainfarts on this site that are passed off as "thoughts" from a bunch of dumbed-down, ignorant, dolts "educated" by a Marxist-dominated, GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED "public education system (Public Education - right out of "The Communist Manifesto"), you will see very clearly that Senator Joe McCarthy was correct. The Marxists are winning and this country is weakened by its citizens that are stoned, drunk, immoral, and it's families have been ravaged by these social ills ("Abolition of the family - right out of "The Communist Manifesto"). Joe McCarthy was the son of a working man, the "Proletariat", and fought against the blue bloods who are destroying the United States. This is the real "dialectic" that proves that what Communism preaches is 180 degrees from reality... It is usually the ELITES that want totalitarian control via Communism, not the Proletariat (the working man)...

Two words: Venona Papers

and if you still don't get it, read "Blacklisted by History" by M. Stanton Evans.

6 ^ | v · Share ›



timmy · 5 years ago

This guy is unbelievable!

4 ^ | v · Share ›



Richard Conant · 5 years ago

as prior posters have noted, Venona Transcripts of Russian WWII diplomatic code have now verified all of McCarthy's accusations regarding US Government employees spying for the Soviet Union during WWII. This will sound incredulous, but McCarthy has been proven correct. But Bill

Moyers will never believe it.

4 ^ | v · Share ›



Razors_Edge · 5 years ago

Even though he used wrong tactics and no proof, he was right! Just look at the current administration littered with Communists and tell me there aren't any communists in our government! A self avowed Communist just resigned from his "Czar" position. One wonders how many others are there?

6 ^ | v · Share ›



Tony Gentry · 5 years ago

Can you provide more information on this? I've been looking for this kind of information. You seem to know what you're talking about.

2 ^ | v · Share ›



Clare · 5 years ago

i like history, too.

2 ^ | v · Share ›



Chelsea · 5 years ago

McCarthyism is often said to parallel the Salem Witch Trials of 1692.

2 ^ | v · Share ›



K3vin is the cool · 6 years ago

this is wack why would they even think of doin this back then n how did it start

2 ^ | v · Share ›



PATRICK O'DEA · 6 years ago

SO....JOE MCCARTHY WARNED AMERICA THAT COMMUNISTS WERE PLOTTING TO SATURATE AMERICA'S SCHOOLS (TO RE-EDUCATE OUR KIDS), MEDIA / HOLLYWOOD (TO CONTROL PROPAGANDA), AND UNIONS (TO INSTILL SOCIALIST VALUES IN THE WORKFORCE). I CAN'T SPEAK TO HIS TACTICS, BUT HIS ALARM WAS SPOT-ON. WHEN NIKITA KRUSHCHEV PROCLAIMED AMERICA WOULD BE LIVING UNDER THEIR FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN JUST TWO GENERATIONS, THIS IS WHAT HE SPOKE OF. HOLLYWOOD, THE MEDIA, OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND UNIONS ARE ALL SOCIALIST (AS IS OUR CURRENT MAJORITY IN WASHINGTON). SOMEONE NEEDS TO PICK UP WHERE MCCARTHY LEFT OFF.

5 ^ | v · Share ›



Long · 5 years ago

i think that reactions to communism where overdoing it a bit, Che Guevara was killed by cia and bolivian officials because he was communists.

i think that counts as overreacting

in my opinion btw, alot of what i read and know is probably bias as it might be with many of the opinions on here

3 ^ | v · Share ›



Hugh Jass · 5 years ago

i think this stuff is very c00l, and i like to read about this dude cause i think he is smart and affected the world, and i wanna know what the "red scare" is, thanks guys.

3 ^ | v · Share ›



Forex guy · 5 years ago

That's quite interesting, thanks for sharing.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Mark Goer-Tarant · 5 years ago

I found your blog on google and read a few of your other posts. I find your Blog very informative just added you to my Google News Reader. Keep up the good work. Look forward to visiting your site more often in the future.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



micheal Khuiness · 5 years ago

I found your blog on google and read this great post. I just added this site to my Google News Reader. I Look forward to reading more here in the future.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Brittney · 6 years ago

i kinda like the study of McCarthyism but at the same time..... i hate it!!!! :) yay

1 ^ | v · Share ›



k time · 6 years ago

and win he did do the black list it med a lot thangs change for the united states

1 ^ | v · Share ›



kp · 6 years ago

he did this because alot of people were scared that a new form of goverment would take over the u.s

1 ^ | v · Share ›



comment 169 · 6 years ago

Comment 169 your correct on the idea of communism that is an awesome idea. BUT we went to the vietnam war because we dont want war. So we used war to prevent war. Honestly the veitnam war was pointless everyone knows that but stfu your austrailian who cares what you have to say you live on an island...

1 ^ | v · Share ›



jordan · 6 years ago

I am Australian and it amazes me how ignorant Americans are, and how ridiculously dogmatic your ill informed views are. McCarthy was a scared, cowardly man who used the fear of the unknown to gain power, and you Americans must be so proud that you allowed that to happen.

Communism is not evil, Stalin was evil but democracy has had evil leaders and that does not make the entire system evil, after all Richard Nixon and the maniac Bush's both ascended to power through democracy. Communism is a wonderful ideology and in Vietnam the people enjoy a wonderful country which is largely due to the benefits of communism, i hope none of your family died fighting in Vietnam because they were essentially committing an act of evil by trying to overthrow a government who was manily concerned with rasing the living standards of the disenfranchised working class. Please America understand you power and try not be so ignorant.

1 ^ | v · Share ›



Todd · 6 years ago

I am hearing uninformed and ignorant people making claims that Obama is a socialist. I dare say those accusing him do not know what socialism is at all; they are simply spewing out of their mouths the garbage being fed them by those within the Republican party who would have their own extremist views supporting the establishment of a fundamentalist-church-governed-nation where fear rules through manipulation and guns, where certain freedoms that conflict with their views are banned and burned, and where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer while the middle-class disappears into history!

Accusing Obama of socialism is the same tactic used by the right in the 40's & 50's called McCarthyism, where "...a young Senator named Joseph McCarthy made a public accusation that more than two hundred "card-carrying" communists had infiltrated the United States government. Though eventually his accusations were proven to be untrue, and he was censured by the Senate for unbecoming conduct, his zealous campaigning ushered in one of the most repressive times in 20th-century American politics." - <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americ...>

Do we want a person in the White House that got there through extremist fear tactics that will eventually be proven to be untrue, and whose conduct will be found unbecoming after the damage has been done to our country? I SAY NO!!!! This is what McCain's campaign is doing!

1 ^ | v · Share ›

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