

Hanging Satan: The Eradication of the Connecticut Witch-Craze  
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## Process Paper

Whether preying upon Jews, communists, homosexuals, or another traditionally demonized collective, our species has a history of persecuting entire demographics under claims of personal protection. Connecticut's witch-craze is an instance of this torturous and regrettable idiosyncrasy, which, centuries ago, manifested itself minutes from where I attend school. I originally learned about the Hartford witch-craze through a moving theatrical performance on the subject that I viewed six years ago. I found through later investigation that this story could be easily researched with the invaluable resources made available by selecting a local topic. With continued exposure to the subject of the witch trials, I realized that the universal relevance of the subject matter had made my choice of project very simple.

The research that I conducted during my project allowed me to develop relationships with the staff of the Connecticut State Library, Wethersfield Town Hall, and both the Connecticut and Wethersfield Historical Societies. While at the State Library and the Town Hall, I investigated property records and their originals on microfilm. At the Connecticut Historical Society I handled the manuscript bearing thirty-eight signatures of townspeople who all believed Katherine Harrison to be irrefutably guilty, along with the court records of many of the other victims. In addition, I gained great insight from our state historian, Walter Woodward, who I interviewed following a lecture he delivered on this topic. By conducting other interviews, I was able to reach out to the descendants of the Hartford witches and their magistrates, and discuss the ways in which they pursued pardons for their distant forebears.

Considering the petrifying nature of the figures necessarily involved in witchcraft cases, I selected the performance category for my project. While crafting my script, I incorporated direct quotes that would allow viewers to grasp the tripartite unity of magic, religion, and diabolism as preponderant elements of Puritan culture. Connecticut's victims were terrified of the elites who tried them, and the pungent tangibility of the devil drove the townspeople to extreme acts in order to protect their families. The stories I researched were inextricably tied to the lively horrors of the courtroom; any method of portrayal betraying this fact would transitively and undeniably dishonor the experiences of those accused.

The presence of the NHD theme in the discussion of the Connecticut witch-craze permeates the fabric of the blood-soaked seventeenth century as well as the discrimination-riddled cultural climate of the modern day. The witchcraft-inspired chaos only ceased to create terror when the magistrates of Harrison's case realized their violation of her rights and overarching responsibility to uphold sagacious sensibility amidst all-encompassing fear. Governor John Winthrop Jr.'s insistence on clearly defined jurisprudence regarding witchcraft impacted our state's mandatory and rational defense of such victims in an irreversible precedent. In the twenty-first century, the abandonment of the intrinsic rights of those accused leads us to inquire about our responsibility to exonerate those persecuted with the hindsight of our modern emancipating morality.