

To be a Witch: Modern Persecutions

Alexis McCauley¹

I. History repeats itself: the Making of Modern Witches

Highlighted in history is the Salem Witch trials of Salem, Massachusetts, the persecution of witches is thought, by a great majority of people, to have ended in the 17th century. Women and men were accused and convicted to death of having alleged supernatural powers, controlling people and events.² These “witches” were tried at court with the evidence of testimonies of dreams and visions.³ This form of spectral evidence is no longer used today in the American court systems, as it is considered to be not credible evidence. With the exclusion of spectral evidence, the Salem Witch Trials came to an end. The beginning of witch hunts, however, did not first appear in the town of Salem, but was rather a “hand-me-down” from England itself.⁴ The precedents for these trials would be England's Witchcraft Act of 1604, which was “*An Act against Conjuration, Witchcraft and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits.*”⁵ This law, if convicted, would be deemed a felony with the first punishment of a year in jail and if convicted twice death.⁶ These laws would be based mainly on religion, being seen as a crime much worse in Salem than what the English courts had in mind for punishment. On an even larger scale, half of all reported men and women witch persecutions would take place in Germany before the Salem Trials. In fact, preceding England's act, Germany's first witch trials took place in the 15th

¹ 03kayli@gmail.com

² Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “Witchcraft Law up to the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692.” *Mass.Gov*, October 31, 2017. <https://www.mass.gov/news/witchcraft-law-up-to-the-salem-witchcraft-trials-5543hof-1692>.

³ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “Witchcraft Law up to the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692.” *Mass.Gov*, October 31, 2017.

⁴ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “Witchcraft Law up to the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692.” *Mass.Gov*, October 31, 2017.

⁵ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “Witchcraft Law up to the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692.” *Mass.Gov*, October 31, 2017.

⁶ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “Witchcraft Law up to the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692.” *Mass.Gov*, October 31, 2017.

century.⁷ These trials have been extensively studied, with evidence to show leading hunters in Germany were also titled as early demonologists.⁸ With this factor in mind, we can understand that concepts from demonology come into play within early and modern persecutions of witches.⁹ In 2011 in Saudi Arabia, both a man and woman were sentenced to beheading for alleged witchcraft practice.¹⁰ Not only is the sentence of death extreme for a supposed witchcraft case, but the atrocious path the court chose to sentence them to a beheading is eye-opening. More cases in Saudi Arabia take the same path, in 2013 the courts sentenced 2 Asian housemaids to 1,000 lashes and a 10-year prison sentence for casting spells on their employer.¹¹ A Lebanese television psychic visiting Saudi Arabia in 2008 was taken by the religious police to court for witchcraft and given the sentence of beheading.¹² In 2010 after the uproar from Amnesty International, the Lebanese entertainer was instead given a 15-year prison sentence.¹³ In between this time, in 2009, the Saudi religious police decided to put together the Anti-Witchcraft Unit which would arrest 215 alleged witches by 2012.¹⁴ These cases link to the early ideas found in England and Germany. The overall idea of the need for witch hunts connects within different cultures through religion, giving witch hunts a stronger background to lean on. Still so much is unknown regarding key information. Missing information, such as when the hunting truly began, is not available. However, with the information currently known, we can piece together for a better understanding of today's related issues. All together, we see a domino effect from Germany to England, and then to the colonies, with many other countries taking the same approach to witchcraft, leading us to present day.

Within the well-known part of American Colonial history, we see the outrageous and atrocious persecutions of innocent people. The majority of people would refer to the Salem Witch Trials as being the most recent punishments for witchcraft, especially in the western hemisphere. Learning from these past mistakes, as we look back on the history of witch

⁷ Johannes Dillinger. "Germany: The mother of witches" <https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/file/c3645b3f-5537-403e-a629-6829cad914d1/1/Germany%20mother%20of%20the%20witches%20-%209781138782204%20-%202019%20-%20Dillinger.pdf>

⁸ Johannes Dillinger. "Germany: The mother of witches"

⁹ Johannes Dillinger. "Germany: The mother of witches"

¹⁰ Horowitz, Mitch. "The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style". New York Times. 2013.

¹¹ Horowitz, Mitch. "The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style". New York Times. 2013.

¹² Horowitz, Mitch. "The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style". New York Times. 2013.

¹³ Horowitz, Mitch. "The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style". New York Times. 2013.

¹⁴ Horowitz, Mitch. "The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style". New York Times. 2013.

persecutions, one can be relieved by the current advanced understanding of our earth, bodies, and medical technology. A possible factor of the western hemisphere being unknowing to these issues can be education as a factor in safeguarding from events like this from occurring today. This unfortunately is not universally the case. Today, in the 21st Century, the persecutions of witches have not stopped.¹⁵ All over the modern world we know today, in the major countries and cities, there are areas where we find the cases of hundreds of innocents being condemned as witches.¹⁶ The United Nations Human Rights Council in 2020 summed up how people are suffering, “Victims suffer harm ranging from discrimination, stigmatization, disinheritance, banishment from families and communities, to extreme violence, such as beatings, burnings, sexual abuse, cutting of body parts and amputation of limbs, grave desecrations, torture, killings and exploitation in the context of human trafficking.”¹⁷ To be a witch in modern persecutions is just as deadly and unjust as the previously mentioned Salem trials and the trials before them all the way back to 15th century Germany. We see that laws are needed to further deter cases but are failing even being so far advanced, from the history of Salem as well as the hunts before it. Taking steps further, not only do more effective laws need to be set into place, but with that there needs to be education on why they are in place. Although laws can be and are in place in several of these communities, the people do not follow them.¹⁸ Moreover, there seems to be little evidence of consequences for those who decide to break those laws, making the laws unregulated. As people within their respective community continue to participate in witch hunts, they show the bases on fear and lack of knowledge as fuel to the fire. This lack of knowledge continues to aid in the increasing number of witch persecutions of innocent people around the world. With the education we have today, looking at these modern persecution of witches, we see a pattern of the lack of medical knowledge and advancements. As a key factor in persecuting

¹⁵ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.
<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/witch-trials-21st-century/>

¹⁶ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹⁷ United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures. “The COVID-19 Pandemic and Harmful Practices impacting Persons with Albinism: Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks (“HPAWR”)” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020.
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Albinism/COVID-19_and_Harmful_Practices.pdf

¹⁸ Ering, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”. American Journal of Social issues and Humanities.
<https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/101168532/download-libre.pdf?1681719549>

a witch, knowledge of medical advancements and findings could be the solution to the situation. Diving into the cases of 21st century witch persecutions, you can point out 3 major areas in which education would be extremely beneficial. These areas include but are not limited to, medicinal herb usage, the idea of luck or lack of it, as well as the understanding of medical conditions. By spreading medical knowledge and educating scared communities, we can make a huge leap towards safeguarding all communities from witch-hunts. This paper will examine modern witch persecutions through a medical lens to show the need for medical education, first looking at medicinal herb usage, then the idea of luck, and lastly medical conditions to then conclude with the understanding of public health being so vital to a healthy and safe community.

II. Signs of a Witch

Recurring themes of persecuted witches in several witch hunting communities can be linked to the misunderstanding of medicinal herb usage. In areas where medical care is not advanced, with the lack of opportunity to learn, we see how being scared of the unknown and in need of exploring different health options come into play.¹⁹ With this said, commonly in these areas wild herbs are used for medicinal purposes.²⁰ As these communities have come to learn that certain herbs are used to cure or aid in the healing of ailments, other herbs that are used, and do not work or have an unexpected effect, are seen as evil potions.²¹ In a historical case in Spain, we are told of a woman being tortured to death for witchcraft after community members found dried herbs jarred in her home.²² These women, along with others attempting to use traditional healing, are labeled as witches in several Spanish communities.²³ Yet, looking through medical records of early women in the field, you can find the practice of nonprofessionals submitting

¹⁹ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

²⁰ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

²¹ Tanaka MM, Kendal JR, Laland KN. "From traditional medicine to witchcraft: why medical treatments are not always efficacious." National Library of Medicine. 2009.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2664922/>

²² Joshua Hammer. "Spain's Centuries Long Witch Hunt killed 700 Women." Smithsonian Magazine, 2022. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/spain-centuries-long-witch-hant-killed-700-women-180981018/>

²³ Joshua Hammer. "Spain's Centuries Long Witch Hunt killed 700 Women." Smithsonian Magazine, 2022.

traditional remedies to a board of doctors for acceptance.²⁴ These practices were welcomed in the professional medical communities in the 9th and 10th century, but outside this we can see how dangerous nonprofessional healing remedies could be.²⁵ To look at an even bigger picture, not all medicine is seen as helpful even with an advanced medical world. Worldwide medical professionals debate on the efficacy of herbal remedies or home cures.²⁶ These remedies are sometimes considered supernatural powers to “witch” doctors, who knowingly use them as such in several different cultural communities.²⁷ In this particular area of witchcraft, curing the sick with powers is praised if you are a known “witch” doctor, however getting sick in the first place is seen as caused by witchcraft as well.²⁸ Witch doctors are healers in these communities and are therefore not persecuted for their use of herbal remedies or “magic”.²⁹ In the United States, this use of magic is well known, specifically in the state of Louisiana. The word used to describe witchcraft in Louisiana is voodoo. Voodoo, which can be spelled multiple ways, is an Afro-Haitian religion that’s philosophy is that everything is a spirit.³⁰ As a major part of voodoo, herbs, minerals, parts of animals' bodies, an individual's possessions, and bodily fluids (like blood or semen) are used to gain power with love, luck, money, etc.³¹ This is a major tourist attraction for visitors of New Orleans, Louisiana, where stores sell magical mixtures to customers. These mixes may be for fun for some, but to those in the voodoo culture they are serious potions with real effects. In other cultures herbal usage is serious as well, if someone was to attempt to use or give a herbal mixture that ends up hurting someone or not helping the ailment (allowing it to progress) they would be persecuted as a witch.³² Women are extremely vulnerable to these types of accusations, as in many communities they are seen as the

²⁴ Gagliardi, Isabella. “How the Middle Ages female doctors were consigned to oblivion” The Conversation, 2023. <https://theconversation.com/how-the-middle-ages-female-doctors-were-consigned-to-oblivion-197756>

²⁵ Gagliardi, Isabella. “How the Middle Ages female doctors were consigned to oblivion” The Conversation, 2023.

²⁶ Tanaka MM, Kendal JR, Laland KN. “From traditional medicine to witchcraft: why medical treatments are not always efficacious.” National Library of Medicine. 2009.

²⁷ Tanaka MM, Kendal JR, Laland KN. “From traditional medicine to witchcraft: why medical treatments are not always efficacious.” National Library of Medicine. 2009.

²⁸ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

²⁹ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

³⁰ McAlister, Elizabeth. “Vodou” Britannica, September 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Vodou>

³¹ West Fork Unitarian Universalists. “Louisiana Voodoo.” November 2012. <https://westforkuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/voodoo.pdf>

³² Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

homemaker, the one to take care of their children or spouse when ill. Risha Kant of New Delhi shares her knowledge on Jharkhand's tribes, explaining that an illness or family problem is blamed on a woman of the house (mother, daughter, grandmother etc.) which majority of the time ends in murder.³³ Commonly, in the Muslim communities, women are singled out as having the power to break up families.³⁴ In 2010, the Islamic group Hamas, ruling the Gaza Strip, arrested 150 women, forcing them to sign confessions of witchcraft.³⁵ Unfortunately, the cases against women being accused of witchcraft continue to pile up. In the same year of 2010, a 62-year-old woman was murdered in front of her residence by an unknown man after the accusation by neighbors of the woman being a witch.³⁶ A 2013 case in Saudi Arabia shows again how vulnerable women are, when a 60-year-old woman was beheaded as an accused witch.³⁷ The evidence used to convict this victim was that of books, veils, and glass bottles of liquid.³⁸ The conviction of witchcraft was stated by the director of Amnesty International as a "cop out" for the government punishing those who exercised freedom of speech.³⁹ However, disregarding the underlying agenda from the government, the community continued to place blame on the evidence of books, veils, and glass bottles. From the community's perspective, the blame is on witchcraft, not on lack of knowledge when needing medical help. Nonetheless, research has been conducted to give support to the use of some herbal remedies of traditional healers that are used in modern medicine as well.⁴⁰ Herbal remedies fall under the category of traditional medicine; that is, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences of the indigenous to different cultures, these are used to heal physical and mental ailments.⁴¹ Understanding the research done by multiple medical professionals of different countries and origins would allow

³³ Sarah Aziz. "Activists Warn about intergenerational domestic violence in Indian Tribes" VOA News, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/activists-warn-about-intergenerational-domestic-violence-in-indian-tribes/7597875.html>

³⁴ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013. <https://www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/islam-magic-witchcraft>

³⁵ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

³⁶ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

³⁷ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

³⁸ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

³⁹ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

⁴⁰ Tanaka MM, Kendal JR, Laland KN. "From traditional medicine to witchcraft: why medical treatments are not always efficacious." National Library of Medicine. 2009.

⁴¹ HAswell R. Ndhlala, Stephen O. Amoo, Bhekumthetho Ncube, Mack Moyo, Jerald J. Nair, Johannes Van Staden. "Medicinal Plant Research in Africa" Science Direct, 2013. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780124059276000163>

people in these areas to understand that herbal mixtures/remedies are not supernatural but can have medicinal properties. Plants like *R. chinensis* are used in traditional healing by herbal healers in north-eastern parts of India.⁴² Different parts of this plant are used to help alleviate illnesses such as gastrointestinal problems and urinary complaints.⁴³ Those working in pharmaceuticals have and continue to research the biological properties that make this plant beneficial.⁴⁴ The hope for this research is to pave paths to more usage of this plant to alleviate other health issues.⁴⁵ To be clear, some herbal usage may be effective while others do not work or can make an illness worse.⁴⁶ Moreover, some herbal remedies may actually contain potentially toxic ingredients.⁴⁷ These would fall more in line with the idea of potions, which is almost always connected with witches. In countries such as Cuba and in some South American countries, witches are known as Brujeria.⁴⁸ These women are often associated with the word “brujeria” when they use natural ingredients, such as herbs, for potions for luck, love, sickness, or just for a flower bath cleanse.⁴⁹ Several different communities are even listed in order of deadliest (those in which you are more likely to be affected by witchcraft) due to the fear of brujerias.⁵⁰ These communities include, and are in order, Ñañigos, Congolese, Jamaicans, Haitians, Canary Islanders, and Chinese.⁵¹ Throughout history, through stories, folklore, and even entertainment purposes, potions are mentioned as an evil mixture of herbs made by a witch to harm others.⁵² These traditions are carried even with those that move. As a Miami, Florida

⁴² Heirangkhongjam Memthoi Devi, Ngaseppam Iboyaima Singh. “Traditional medicinal uses and pharmacological properties of *Rhus chinensis* Mill.: A systematic review” Science Direct, August 2018. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1876382018303846>

⁴³ Heirangkhongjam Memthoi Devi, Ngaseppam Iboyaima Singh. “Traditional medicinal uses and pharmacological properties of *Rhus chinensis* Mill.: A systematic review” Science Direct, August 2018.

⁴⁴ Heirangkhongjam Memthoi Devi, Ngaseppam Iboyaima Singh. “Traditional medicinal uses and pharmacological properties of *Rhus chinensis* Mill.: A systematic review” Science Direct, August 2018.

⁴⁵ Heirangkhongjam Memthoi Devi, Ngaseppam Iboyaima Singh. “Traditional medicinal uses and pharmacological properties of *Rhus chinensis* Mill.: A systematic review” Science Direct, August 2018.

⁴⁶ Tanaka MM, Kendal JR, Laland KN. “From traditional medicine to witchcraft: why medical treatments are not always efficacious.” National Library of Medicine. 2009.

⁴⁷ Tanaka MM, Kendal JR, Laland KN. “From traditional medicine to witchcraft: why medical treatments are not always efficacious.” National Library of Medicine. 2009.

⁴⁸ Insights. “Brujeria (Witchcraft, Sorcery) Cuban Studies Institute.2022. <https://cubanstudiesinstitute.us/bits-of-cuban-history/brujeria-witchcraft-sorcery/>

⁴⁹ Cuba Insights. “Brujeria (Witchcraft, Sorcery) Cuban Studies Institute.2022.

⁵⁰ Cuba Insights. “Brujeria (Witchcraft, Sorcery) Cuban Studies Institute.2022.

⁵¹ Cuba Insights. “Brujeria (Witchcraft, Sorcery) Cuban Studies Institute.2022.

⁵² Matt Kaplan. “Science of the Magical from the Holy Grail to Love Potions to Superpowers.” https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=yW_JCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=the+idea+of+potio

native, the Cuban community is extremely influential. Growing up, even as a non-hispanic, brujeria was a known folklore. Many friends starting at a young age would speak of being forced by their parents to bathe in different flower mixtures. As I grew older, the understanding behind this ritual was explained as potions used to ward off bad energy, to undo spells placed on you, and for good health. In modern and widely accepted potions, what we call medicine, 40% of all current sales have antimicrobial elements.⁵³ Antimicrobial substances have agents that can make them beneficial for health as well as dangerous when given too much.⁵⁴ This follows into the understanding of the human body and the components of diseases and other ailments. Whether or not a person can overcome an ailment without serious treatments such as surgery or intense rounds of medication, healing is based on many factors and medical knowledge to appropriately treat someone. This means no witchcraft involved, just nature.

III. Psychological Pull

When examining past witch hunts like those of the Salem Witch Trials, we can see a psychological factor involved in the process. Mental health is an element that is not only geared towards accused witches, but also those who are accusing them. The word hysteria is often brought up when we think of historical witch trials. Hysteria was the first mental disorder attributed to women from the perspective of scientific and demonological ideas.⁵⁵ Today, we define hysteria as a psychoneurosis marked by emotional excitability and disturbances of the psychogenic, sensory, vasomotor, and visceral functions.⁵⁶ Mass hysteria relating to witches began in Salem as three girls, including Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, began to have devilish fits.⁵⁷ These fits would be confirmed by doctors as bewitchment.⁵⁸ Many young girls of

[ns&ots=UpbcF2g4q2&sig=tX9pjdUJQ5hejki3A4E8i0kIQPc#v=onepage&q=the%20idea%20of%20potions](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2441109/?page=1&f=false)

⁵³ Paul A Bunn. "Present Power Potions For Pestilences and Plagues"

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2441109/?page=1>

⁵⁴ Paul A Bunn. "Present Power Potions For Pestilences and Plagues"

⁵⁵ Cecilia Tasca, Mariangela Rapetti, Mauro Giovanni Carta, and Bianca Fadda. "Women And Hysteria In The History Of Mental Health" National Library of Medicine. 2012.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3480686/>

⁵⁶ Merriam Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hysteria>

⁵⁷ The Salem Witch Trials: Legal Resources - The Salem Witch Trials - The University of Chicago Library." n.d. <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/collex/exhibits/salem-witch-trials-legal-resources/>.

⁵⁸ "The True Legal Horror Story of the Salem Witch Trials." n.d. *The News and Insights Blog From New England Law | Boston*.

<https://www.nesl.edu/blog/detail/a-true-legal-horror-story-the-laws-leading-to-the-salem-witch-trials>.

prominent families would come forward to accuse others for their own “satanic possessions.”⁵⁹ From there twenty people would be put to death and several more sent to jail where some would die waiting for court.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, in Salem, suspicions and beliefs within religion prevailed. The law was mixed with religion, something that is outlawed today in many places. Along with religion, the prejudice between town members was at play. Sarah Good, a woman convicted and put to death for witchcraft explains, “As for being a witch, I looked the part - bent, haggard, leathery-skinned -.”⁶¹ This leads to the judicial decision made during these trials, the idea that one can give a name of another witch to be protected from the death sentence.⁶² Sarah Good may have been convicted due to her appearance and “likeness” to a witch. The fear of the accused witches and the town's fear of witchcraft combine into a perfect hysteria storm. Leaders in positions of power use this to their advantage. Iran’s president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Taliban leader Mullah Omar, and Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari have all generated magical beliefs to further their political hold.⁶³ In another area of the world, President Yahya Jammeh of Gambia claims witchcraft is being used against him, accusing over a thousand Gambians who are arrested and tortured.⁶⁴ At least two people have been confirmed dead.⁶⁵ Another case of this is currently being reported, Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria, credits his birth to witches.⁶⁶ This has upset the community greatly, as he used witchcraft as the blame for his mistakes and bad leadership.⁶⁷ This statement of his had no backing as he claimed that his mother’s pregnancy was lengthened to twelve months, making him a bad leader essentially.⁶⁸ Of course, this ties into the category of luck. Good or bad luck can cause superstitions of someone being a witch.⁶⁹ In

⁵⁹ Pruitt, Sarah. 2023. “Salem Witch Trials: Who Were the Main Accusers?” HISTORY. September 29, 2023. <https://www.history.com/news/salem-witch-trials-accusers>.

⁶⁰ “The True Legal Horror Story of the Salem Witch Trials.” n.d. *The News and Insights Blog From New England Law | Boston*.

⁶¹ “Salem, Massachusetts, 1692: Sarah Good.” n.d. *Ploughshares*. <https://www-jstor-org.access.library.miami.edu/stable/40348597?sid=primo&seq=1>.

⁶² “The True Legal Horror Story of the Salem Witch Trials.” n.d. *The News and Insights Blog From New England Law | Boston*.

⁶³ Perlmutter, Dawn. “The Politics of Muslim Magic” Middle East Forum, 2013.

⁶⁴ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

⁶⁵ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

⁶⁶ Igwe, Leo. “Obasanjo’s Witch Statement, Unfortunate and Misguided” The Maravi Post, 2024. <https://www.maravipost.com/obasanjos-witch-statement-unfortunate-and-misguided/>

⁶⁷ Igwe, Leo. “Obasanjo’s Witch Statement, Unfortunate and Misguided” The Maravi Post, 2024.

⁶⁸ Igwe, Leo. “Obasanjo’s Witch Statement, Unfortunate and Misguided” The Maravi Post, 2024.

⁶⁹ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

Kenya, we see the connection of witchcraft being to blame for suffering.⁷⁰ With an overstretching budget in 1981 Kenya officials decided to get rid of the money allotted for public spending and healthcare.⁷¹ Witchcraft accusations then began to surge in Kenya.⁷² A riot and stampede killed 13 people in the Congo in 2008 due to luck.⁷³ Rumors of a successful soccer player using witchcraft triggered the riot.⁷⁴ Similarly, in the 1970s, an oil bloom in Nigeria allowed a few citizens to gain extreme wealth.⁷⁵ This luck, of sudden wealth, gave other Nigerians the ‘evidence’ of witchcraft being at play.⁷⁶ Back to the Middle East, foreigners in Saudi Arabia, more specifically those from Africa, were selected as the reason for black magic infecting their community.⁷⁷ These women were to blame for the unfortunate luck of many wealthy families.⁷⁸ Moreover, husbands who faced charges of sexual harassment used these women as the excuse, claiming they were put under a spell.⁷⁹ This excuse would discredit the victims of the sexual harassment, leaving these men in continued power.⁸⁰ Wealth and power are two of the most sought after achievements of life. In fact, children in Nigeria are abused and murdered for the chance at this good luck. In 2007 several cases of children being abused, poisoned, and burned in Nigeria were reportedly due to witchcraft.⁸¹ Specifically, using children in witchcraft rituals is common.⁸² Children are also being accused of being witches themselves, yet the reason is unknown to researchers.⁸³ In places like Nigeria, one of the areas with regular witch persecutions, laws have been set to specifically protect children from witchcraft

⁷⁰ Federici, Silvia and Markham-Cantor, Alice. “How Social Turmoil Has Increased Witch Hunts throughout History.” *Scientific American*. 2023. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-social-turmoil-has-increased-witch-hunts-throughout-history/>

⁷¹ Federici, Silvia and Markham-Cantor, Alice. “How Social Turmoil Has Increased Witch Hunts throughout History.” *Scientific American*. 2023.

⁷² Federici, Silvia and Markham-Cantor, Alice. “How Social Turmoil Has Increased Witch Hunts throughout History.” *Scientific American*. 2023.

⁷³ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” *National Geographic Society*, 2024.

⁷⁴ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” *National Geographic Society*, 2024.

⁷⁵ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” *National Geographic Society*, 2024.

⁷⁶ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” *National Geographic Society*, 2024.

⁷⁷ Perlmutter, Dawn. “The Politics of Muslim Magic” *Middle East Forum*, 2013.

⁷⁸ Perlmutter, Dawn. “The Politics of Muslim Magic” *Middle East Forum*, 2013.

⁷⁹ Perlmutter, Dawn. “The Politics of Muslim Magic” *Middle East Forum*, 2013.

⁸⁰ Perlmutter, Dawn. “The Politics of Muslim Magic” *Middle East Forum*, 2013.

⁸¹ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” *National Geographic Society*, 2024.

⁸² ng, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”.*American Journal of Social issues and Humanities*.

⁸³ Ering, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”.*American Journal of Social issues and Humanities*.

accusations.⁸⁴ However, in these same places children are regularly abused, punished, or killed for being a witch or being used for witchcraft.⁸⁵ UN Convention on the Rights of Child (UN, 1989), 1990 Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child, Child Right Law of Nigeria (2009), and The Nigerian Constitution (1999) are a few laws intended to protect the children of Nigeria, unfortunately they are not followed.⁸⁶ Children all over the world, even in developed countries, have been unlucky when it comes to accusations of witchcraft.⁸⁷ According to research, physically disabled, orphaned, or children living with a step-mother are at great risk to be used to fulfill a ‘witches’ spread of good or bad luck.⁸⁸ A popular preacher in Nigeria, named Helen Ukpabio, stated, “if a child under the age of 2 screams in the night, cries and is always feverish with deteriorating health, he or she is a servant of Satan.”⁸⁹ Babies cry due to it being their only communication that they need something, these crying sounds can be different yet are normal.⁹⁰ Different doctors provide tips to mothers on understanding what their child's cry means. Manipulation is at play with each of these situations. In the Harvard Business Review article, “Are you being manipulated or influenced?” the author explains, “manipulation has many negative connotations, including carrying out devious behaviors designed to exploit and control others. Think of it like mind control — using emotional and psychological tactics to change or alter someone’s perception or behavior in an underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive way.”⁹¹ By understanding what manipulation is and looking at examples of it causing hysteria, harsh accusations, and so many more cases that we can see all over the world. In the Republic of Benin, the country's officials use this fear to explain why some citizens are doing better than

⁸⁴ Ering, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”. American Journal of Social issues and Humanities.

⁸⁵ Ering, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”. American Journal of Social issues and Humanities.

⁸⁶ Ering, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”. American Journal of Social issues and Humanities.

⁸⁷ Ering, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”. American Journal of Social issues and Humanities.

⁸⁸ Ering, S.O., Omono, C.E. and Uyang, F.A. “Child-witch phenomenon and its social implications in Nigeria”. American Journal of Social issues and Humanities.

⁸⁹ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. New York Times. 2013.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/opinion/the-persecution-of-witches-21st-century-style.html>

⁹⁰ Cleveland Clinic. “Why is your baby crying?”2023. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-is-my-baby-crying>

⁹¹ Ruchi, Sinha. “Are You Being Influenced or Manipulated?”. Harvard Business Review. Ascend. January 2022. <https://hbr.org/2022/01/are-you-being-influenced-or-manipulated>

others.⁹² In Central Africa, revivalist churches pastor-prophets “fight” against witchery in order to show good leadership and gain power in their communities.⁹³ On the other hand we have psychological factors in those accused of witchcraft in the mix as well. Besides hysteria, epilepsy is one of the leading diseases that is confused with witchcraft or demonic possession.⁹⁴ Dr. Beatriz Quintanilla spoke on the fallacy of witchcraft at the American Psychiatric Association meeting, revealing her evidence of the neurological and psychiatric disorders that were at play during the 15th century witch hunts.⁹⁵ Today all over the world, we see an increasing number of people who wholeheartedly believe in witches and overall demonic impact on misfortune. In fact, professionals are beginning to incorporate exorcisms to rid people of mental illness.⁹⁶ From medical advancements and research, we know that depression may be caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors.⁹⁷ Anxiety is also medical research and known to be characterized by a variety of neuroendocrine, neurotransmitter, and neuroanatomical disruptions.⁹⁸ Not only can anxiety and depression be explained medically, but all other listed mental disorders can as well. Hamel speaks on this, “whatever one’s personal problem—depression, anxiety, substance addiction, or even a runaway sexual appetite—there are exorcism ministries available today that will happily claim expertise for dealing with it.”⁹⁹ The bonus is that one is not held responsible for it. “Indwelling demons are mainly to blame, and getting rid of them is the key to moral and psychological redemption.”¹⁰⁰ Hamel notes that the evangelical Christians who practice deliverance are middle-class Americans, among them doctors, nurses, and therapists, many of whom are willing to incorporate deliverance into their professional careers.”¹⁰¹ Professionals in the psychiatric field do not know what to make of it

⁹² Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

⁹³ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. New York Times. 2013.

⁹⁴ Beatriz Quintanilla. “Witchcraft or Mental Illness?”. Psychiatric Times. 2010.

<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/witchcraft-or-mental-illness>

⁹⁵ Beatriz Quintanilla. “Witchcraft or Mental Illness?”. Psychiatric Times. 2010.

⁹⁶ L. Ann Hamel. “Mental Illness and Demonization.” Digital Commons at Andrew University. 2015.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1300&context=jams>

⁹⁷ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “Mental Health Conditions: Depression and Anxiety.” 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/diseases/depression-anxiety.html#>

⁹⁸ Elizabeth I. Martin, Kerry J. Ressler, Elisabeth Binder, and Charles B. Nemeroff. “The Neurobiology of Anxiety Disorders: Brain Imaging, Genetics, and Psychoneuroendocrinology.” National Library of Medicine. 2013. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3684250/>

⁹⁹ L. Anne Hamel. “Mental Illness and Demonization” Digital Commons at Andrew University. 2015.

¹⁰⁰ L. Anne Hamel. “Mental Illness and Demonization” Digital Commons at Andrew University. 2015.

¹⁰¹ L. Ann Hamel. “Mental Illness and Demonization.” Digital Commons at Andrew University. 2015.

all.¹⁰² When following the research of religion as a primary source for everyday people to understand the unknown, we see a fundamentally psychotherapeutic reasoning.¹⁰³ From this perspective we can see the source of religion or superstition as the base of understanding ‘magical’ or evil forces’ impact on human life. This of course is taken to a whole different level in communities where fear is hand in hand with these beliefs. In some areas Christian traditions take part in the understanding of witchcraft.¹⁰⁴ In this situation people believe that witches have a “pact” with evil spirits that give them malevolent powers.¹⁰⁵ In other places, like Asia and Africa, folklore and cultural beliefs give backing to the ideas and fears of witches.¹⁰⁶ These beliefs follow a close line to superstition, which was mentioned previously. In Benin, babies who are not born face up and head first are considered witches.¹⁰⁷ This birth position is known as breech and can be caused by several different reasons including: if the mother goes into early labor, has an abnormally shaped uterus, fibroids, or too much amniotic fluid, if there is more than one baby in the womb, or having placenta previa (when the placenta is lower and blocking the cervix).¹⁰⁸ All of which has nothing to do with magic and can be explained with appropriate medical education. However, due to this superstition, the babies are blamed for poor agricultural seasons and illness.¹⁰⁹ These “baby witches” are in turn killed or abandoned.¹¹⁰ A report from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, revealed 25,000-50,000 children on the streets in the capital of the Congo were abandoned by families who accused the child of witchcraft.¹¹¹ Across the world, in Germany for centuries more children are targeted as the Devils children.¹¹² Persecuted adults confirmed this idea when saying the Devil convinced

¹⁰² L. Ann Hamel. “Mental Illness and Demonization.” Digital Commons at Andrew University. 2015.

¹⁰³ L. Ann Hamel. “Mental Illness and Demonization.” Digital Commons at Andrew University. 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffery Russell, Loan Lewis.”Witchcraft”. Britannica. 2024.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/witchcraft/Witchcraft-in-Africa-and-the-world>

¹⁰⁵ Jeffery Russell, Loan Lewis.”Witchcraft”. Britannica. 2024.

¹⁰⁶ Jeffery Russell, Loan Lewis.”Witchcraft”. Britannica. 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹⁰⁸ Mount Sinai. “Breech Birth”. <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/special-topic/breech-birth>

¹⁰⁹ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹¹⁰ Schons, Mary. “Witch Trials in the 21st Century.” National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹¹¹ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. New York Times. 2013.

¹¹² Walinski-Kiehl, Robert. “The devil's children: child witch-trials in early modern Germany” Archive, 1996. https://web.archive.org/web/20191021191853id_/https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/196AE61299E6FB7203FA863971A4CD63/S0268416000003301a.pdf/div-class-title-the-devil-s-children-child-witch-trials-in-early-modern-germany-div.pdf

them in childhood to become witches.¹¹³ Innocent children take this hit majorly in many towns of Germany such as, Wurzburg, Calw, and Bamberg.¹¹⁴ In these cases children were unprotected by adults and other children.¹¹⁵ August 1683 in Calw, an 11-year-old boy admitted to witchcraft to family members blaming the old neighbor next door and other children.¹¹⁶ If medical knowledge on all of these highlighted subjects were taught and exposed to all of the world, these murders by “witch hunters” would not take place without consequences or at all.

IV. Medical Diagnoses

High risk factors with condemning children of witchcraft is physical health “decline” or abnormality. In Ezo County of Sudan, we have research being held on medical knowledge and what the little bit of medical procedures being conducted mean to the public.¹¹⁷ A random survey group of Ezo county members with 381 adults, 53 of them being college students, an overwhelming majority of the participants mentioned non-biomedical afflictions.¹¹⁸ This information is of great interest as it makes one wonder what the members of these communities think are at play for themselves and loved ones getting sick.¹¹⁹ Further research showed the actual medical afflictions that majorly affect Ezo county, things such as malaria, scabies, sleeping sickness and HIV.¹²⁰ Leaders of these ill communities are known to be ones that hear out witchcraft cases.¹²¹ This information leads the medical community to worry about the health

¹¹³ Walinski-Kiehl, Robert. “The devil's children: child witch-trials in early modern Germany” Archive, 1996.

¹¹⁴ Walinski-Kiehl, Robert. “The devil's children: child witch-trials in early modern Germany” Archive, 1996.

¹¹⁵ Walinski-Kiehl, Robert. “The devil's children: child witch-trials in early modern Germany” Archive, 1996.

¹¹⁶ Walinski-Kiehl, Robert. “The devil's children: child witch-trials in early modern Germany” Archive, 1996.

¹¹⁷ Allen, Tim. “Witchcraft, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among the Azande of Sudan.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2007. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17531050701625789>

¹¹⁸ Allen, Tim. “Witchcraft, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among the Azande of Sudan.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2007.

¹¹⁹ Allen, Tim. “Witchcraft, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among the Azande of Sudan.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2007

¹²⁰ Allen, Tim. “Witchcraft, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among the Azande of Sudan.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2007

¹²¹ Allen, Tim. “Witchcraft, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among the Azande of Sudan.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2007

response to HIV.¹²² The main disease that is targeted by witch hunters is that of HIV/AIDS's.¹²³ This incurable disease is spread through body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal or rectal fluids, and human breast milk.¹²⁴ Research done by the World Health Organization(WHO) shows that 25% of pregnant women in Zambia have HIV/AIDS.¹²⁵ As the disease spreads to other women, men, and children, whoever has the disease is then accused of witchcraft.¹²⁶ No one is safe from the conviction of witchcraft if they contract the disease. Scientific leaders and government advisors have been targeted and killed in Zambia due to the HIV/AIDS disease.¹²⁷ In the same town in Zambia, within four months, 16 people were murdered due to witchcraft accusations.¹²⁸ In Papua New Guinea 2009, a woman was burned alive due to having infected men with HIV/AIDS.¹²⁹ Then a month later, a father and a son were also killed for having the disease.¹³⁰ Malaria has also been targeted as a witchcraft illness.¹³¹ Malaria is a disease contracted through a mosquito bite where parasites enter the bloodstream.¹³² This disease can cause death when untreated.¹³³ Symptoms of having been infected with malaria are: headache, fever, chills, fatigue, chest pain, vomiting, cough, etc.¹³⁴ In Gambia those who contract malaria commonly seek help from herbal treatments first.¹³⁵ When the disease worsens, due to not

¹²² Allen, Tim. "Witchcraft, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS among the Azande of Sudan." *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2007

¹²³ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹²⁴ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "How HIV Spreads". 2024.

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/causes/index.html>

¹²⁵ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹²⁶ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹²⁷ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹²⁸ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹²⁹ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹³⁰ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹³¹ O'Neill, Sarah, Gryseels, Charlotte, Dierickx, Susan, Mwesigwa, Julia, Okebe, Joseph, d'Alessandro, Umberto, Peeters Grietens, Koen. "Foul wind, spirits and witchcraft: illness conceptions and health-seeking behaviour for malaria in the Gambia." *Malaria Journal*, 2015. <https://malariajournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12936-015-0687-2>

¹³² Cleveland Clinic. "Malaria: Causes, Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatment & Prevention." <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/15014-malaria>

¹³³ Cleveland Clinic. "Malaria: Causes, Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatment & Prevention."

¹³⁴ Cleveland Clinic. "Malaria: Causes, Symptoms, Diagnosis, Treatment & Prevention."

¹³⁵ O'Neill, Sarah, Gryseels, Charlotte, Dierickx, Susan, Mwesigwa, Julia, Okebe, Joseph, d'Alessandro, Umberto, Peeters Grietens, Koen. "Foul wind, spirits and witchcraft: illness conceptions and health-seeking behaviour for malaria in the Gambia." *Malaria Journal*, 2015.

seeking medical treatment, to hallucinations or convulsions the supernatural is blamed.¹³⁶ Although not a disease, another medical condition of having albinism in several places in Africa is extremely dangerous.¹³⁷ These people with genetic abnormalities are hunted for their ‘magic’.¹³⁸ In Nigeria Albinos are killed for their limbs, and ‘magic’ skin for witch doctors to use.¹³⁹ In areas such as Tanzania, since 2007, more than 50 people with albinism have been killed for ritual use.¹⁴⁰ As atrocious as this sounds, harming these albino individuals is welcomed even if it is for witchcraft due to the view of it being needed by the community.¹⁴¹ Albinism is a condition that is passed down through families where their bodies make no melanin.¹⁴² This condition is not curable.¹⁴³ If this knowledge was widely known these people would no longer be targeted. A nurse from Namibia with first-hand experience of witchcraft accusations explains that with little medical knowledge and the need for explaining mysterious symptoms, witchcraft is the only possible blame for misfortune according to his culture.¹⁴⁴ Later in life, when becoming a nurse, Andrias Mangundu learns of many ailments that are in fact not witchcraft but medical conditions.¹⁴⁵ A stand-out illness, when learning new medical knowledge, was that of dementia.¹⁴⁶ Dementia is an umbrella term for memory loss.¹⁴⁷ This is a progressive disease with no cure, however treatment options are given to slow the process.¹⁴⁸ Inside the brain of a patient with dementia is the damage of neurons that communicate with the body for all functions.¹⁴⁹ Starting with the memory section of the brain (entorhinal cortex and hippocampus), neurons lose

¹³⁶ O'Neill, Sarah, Gryseels, Charlotte, Dierickx, Susan, Mwesigwa, Julia, Okebe, Joseph, d'Alessandro, Umberto, Peeters Grietens, Koen. "Foul wind, spirits and witchcraft: illness conceptions and health-seeking behaviour for malaria in the Gambia." *Malaria Journal*, 2015.

¹³⁷ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹³⁸ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹³⁹ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹⁴⁰ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹⁴¹ Mayo Clinic. December 2023.

¹⁴² Mayo Clinic. December 2023. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/albinism/symptoms-causes/syc-20369184>

¹⁴³ Mayo Clinic. December 2023.

¹⁴⁴ Witch Hunt. 2024. "The Difference Between Witchcraft and Dementia With Andrias Mangundu." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EEELNf4gbc>.

¹⁴⁵ Witch Hunt. 2024. "The Difference Between Witchcraft and Dementia With Andrias Mangundu."

¹⁴⁶ Witch Hunt. 2024. "The Difference Between Witchcraft and Dementia With Andrias Mangundu."

¹⁴⁷ Alzheimer's Association. "What is Dementia? Symptoms, Causes & Treatment." <https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/what-is-dementia>

¹⁴⁸ Alzheimer's Association. "What is Dementia? Symptoms, Causes & Treatment."

¹⁴⁹ National Institute on Aging. "What Happens to the Brain in Alzheimer's Disease?" <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-causes-and-risk-factors/what-happens-brain-alzheimers-disease>

connection to one another and will eventually die.¹⁵⁰ In the beginning stages of dementia, someone will exhibit strange behavior such as losing things, forgetting appointments, etc.¹⁵¹ Based on what Mr. Mangundu states, with no understanding of this being a known disease, witchcraft can easily be blamed. This mindset is carried on in many places throughout the world. In Afghanistan, the mentally ill are treated cruelly even in hospitals.¹⁵² Quasi-medical practices have mentally ill patients chained to shrines for forty days to complete the ritual of exorcism.¹⁵³ Even with medical professionals reportedly against these practices, the greater population and culture sticks to them as a necessity.¹⁵⁴ In instances like this the community's lack of medical information prevents those who are medical professionals from healing as one's beliefs will always outweigh their fear of the unknown. With a majority belief in a community being that of blaming witchcraft for illness, the few that do have the knowledge are ignored.

As one begins to look into more and more cases on witch persecutions, we see progressive violence and disturbing consequences. Jail is not enough for many of these accused witches, they also endure torture and extreme deaths. Witch hunters kill accused witches in a power-hungry way, making an example of each one. By killing off accused witches, these hunters make a name and reputation for themselves. We see that the witch hunters are overwhelmingly male, and their victims are mainly women.¹⁵⁵ Human rights agent Jack Urame of the Melanesian Institute in Papua New Guinea reveals the statistics of witchcraft violence ratio as 5 to 1 for women.¹⁵⁶ In India, women are forced to leave their homes out of fear of being accused.¹⁵⁷ Research shows that landowning women are accused of witchcraft simply for having land, neighbors will see this and begin collecting wood to burn their neighbor.¹⁵⁸ The majority of these women are older widows and with fear leave their homes for their neighbors to eventually take over.¹⁵⁹ These are serious threats to women's lives, threats that are positively promised if they were to stay. Several cases of witchcraft accusations around the world show just how

¹⁵⁰ National Institute on Aging. "What Happens to the Brain in Alzheimer's Disease?"

¹⁵¹ National Institute on Aging. "What Happens to the Brain in Alzheimer's Disease?"

¹⁵² Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

¹⁵³ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

¹⁵⁴ Perlmutter, Dawn. "The Politics of Muslim Magic" Middle East Forum, 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Horowitz, Mitch. "The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style". New York Times. 2013.

¹⁵⁶ Horowitz, Mitch. "The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style". New York Times. 2013.

¹⁵⁷ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹⁵⁸ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

¹⁵⁹ Schons, Mary. "Witch Trials in the 21st Century." National Geographic Society, 2024.

violent this practice has become. Article 5 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states, “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”¹⁶⁰ Research completed by the United Nation estimated the number of witches murdered each year to be in the thousands, beatings and banishments run in the millions.¹⁶¹ Violence continues all over the world with an alarming number of mutilations and murders.¹⁶² A mob in Papua New Guinea reportedly burned a woman alive in 2013.¹⁶³ The 20-year-old, Kepari Leniata, was a young mother and an accused witch.¹⁶⁴ Leniata’s murderers were found and charged; however, they did not have to face trial.¹⁶⁵ With such horrific crimes against alleged witches, Papua New Guinea repealed a 1971 law allowing citizens to combat witches as self-defense.¹⁶⁶ Laws like this and the lack of consequences allow these witch hunts to continue. Another case in Nepal has been documented where a woman was also burned alive in 2012.¹⁶⁷ In Santa Barbara, Colombia accused witches are often beaten to death.¹⁶⁸ Stoned and beheaded victims, alleged witches, have also been reported in Indonesia and Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶⁹ Witchcraft persecutions are an international issue for men, women, and children alike. Unfortunately, the brunt of the persecutions are women and children, as they are the vulnerable members of society. This trend is shown in the historical cases as well, in many period timepieces women were displayed as witches having vast knowledge of nature and sexuality.¹⁷⁰ Some researchers have contributed this belief in witchcraft to the lack of biological knowledge.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁰ United Nations. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 1948. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

¹⁶¹ Federici, Silvia and Markham-Cantor, Alice. “How Social Turmoil Has Increased Witch Hunts throughout History.” *Scientific America*. 2023.

¹⁶² Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁶³ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁶⁴ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁶⁵ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁶⁷ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁶⁸ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁶⁹ Horowitz, Mitch. “The Persecution of Witches, 21st Century Style”. *New York Times*. 2013.

¹⁷⁰ Gagliardi, Isabella. “How the Middle Ages female doctors were consigned to oblivion” *The Conversation*, 2023.

¹⁷¹ Gagliardi, Isabella. “How the Middle Ages female doctors were consigned to oblivion” *The Conversation*, 2023.

V. Public Health

The use of what we know of public health today can be seen in 1798 in the Americas with the Act for the Relief of Sick and Disabled Seamen when the agency of Marine Hospital Service was created.¹⁷² The primary purpose when starting this agency was to set up a strong base of quarantining for those with contagious diseases caught at sea.¹⁷³ As the need for more responsibilities to be added to the agency, in 1912, a name change to the United States Public Health Service was completed.¹⁷⁴ These expanding responsibilities included covering more contagious diseases as well as researching the effects on individuals and communities.¹⁷⁵ Today, public health is defined as the science of protecting and improving health for all.¹⁷⁶ As a formal college degree, offered at many universities, health care workers enter this field understanding the breakthroughs it has provided for health. The collaboration between government and private companies to allow for open dialogue within the community is the major tool that aids in their mission.¹⁷⁷ Proactively preventing harm, those working in Public Health can branch out into a variety of issues including, firearm safety, impacts of racism, nutrition, research and regulations for diseases like Covid-19, etc.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, this profession is an area of required study for those going into the medical field at some universities. As a former Biological Science major at the University of Miami, basics in public health is a part of the curriculum. Information on current research, statistics, and possible scenarios are extensively reviewed. The necessity of public health being a part of society was shown in the courses I completed, giving myself and others a window into what keeps the medical field credible. In fact, I would state that because of the work of public health officials, hospitals are able to treat more individuals in early stages of illness or even preventatively. This can be shown with breast cancer patients as public health programs

¹⁷² Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "The Roots of Public Health and CDC." David J. Sencer CDC Museum, July 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/online/story-of-cdc/roots/index.html>

¹⁷³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "The Roots of Public Health and CDC." David J. Sencer CDC Museum, July 2021.

¹⁷⁴ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "The Roots of Public Health and CDC." David J. Sencer CDC Museum, July 2021.

¹⁷⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "The Roots of Public Health and CDC." David J. Sencer CDC Museum, July 2021.

¹⁷⁶ CDC Foundation. "What is Public Health?" <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health>

¹⁷⁷ CDC Foundation. "What is Public Health?"

¹⁷⁸ School of Public Health, University of Michigan. "Why Study Public Health?" <https://sph.umich.edu/admissions/why-study-public-health.html>

diligently work to spread awareness.¹⁷⁹ In 2024, more than 360,000 people will be diagnosed with breast cancer, with a 99% rate surviving through early detection.¹⁸⁰ This information is highly known as public health workers have created programs, information websites, and the extremely influential pink ribbon symbol. These efforts within the public health advances have led to many benefits, including one's lifespan. In the United States an extension of 25 years on one's life since the 1900s has been contributed to public health.¹⁸¹ This achievement along with many others globally shows the benefits of public health.¹⁸² For further example, international health regulations are in place and legally binding 196 countries with the help of the World Health Organization.¹⁸³ Of these countries 100% have reported on international health regulation cases.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, 83% of high risk countries have implemented/prepared plans for possible emergencies.¹⁸⁵ Not only does the World Health Organization give these broader information, they also dive into specific current health issues within communities.¹⁸⁶ Herpes is a highlighted health problem for global public health.¹⁸⁷ Statistics show that 3.8 billion people have herpes type 1 and 519.5 million have herpes type 2.¹⁸⁸ Continued research for prevention and control of herpes, like possible vaccines or topical microbicides, is naming one of the many important missions of public health officials.¹⁸⁹ The overall mission for the World Health Organization is to continue to spread awareness of the disease and prevention from further spreading.¹⁹⁰ Recently

¹⁷⁹ National Breast Cancer Foundation. "Breast Cancer Awareness Month."2024.

<https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-cancer-awareness-month/>

¹⁸⁰ National Breast Cancer Foundation. "Breast Cancer Awareness Month."2024.

¹⁸¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Ten great public health achievements--United States, 1900-1999." *MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report* vol. 48,12 (1999)<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10220250/>

¹⁸² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Ten great public health achievements--worldwide, 2001-2010." *MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report* vol. 60,24 (2011)<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21697806/>

¹⁸³ World Health Organization. "International Health Regulations." https://www.who.int/health-topics/international-health-regulations#tab=tab_1

¹⁸⁴ World Health Organization. "International Health Regulations."

¹⁸⁵ World Health Organization. "International Health Regulations."

¹⁸⁶ World Health Organization. "International Health Regulations."

¹⁸⁷ World Health Organization. "International Health Regulations."

¹⁸⁸ World Health Organization. "Herpes Simplex Virus."September 2024.<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/herpes-simplex-virus>

¹⁸⁹ World Health Organization. "Herpes Simplex Virus."September 2024.

¹⁹⁰ World Health Organization. "Herpes Simplex Virus."September 2024.

during the covid pandemic the necessity for public health has been shown.¹⁹¹ With panic and fear involved, public health professionals were able to take over by providing plans, information, and the acknowledgement of false information.¹⁹² These steps overall led to a decrease in cases and finally a pull away from high death tolls.¹⁹³ Many more examples of the benefits of public health can be found in yearly reports through the World Health Organization.¹⁹⁴

As public health has shown major progress with many world health and safety issues, the growing problem of modern witch persecutions would greatly benefit as well. With examples above of public health officials aiding in the affected population decrease of different issues, we can see the potential of a decrease in witch persecutions as well. Although there are different groups advocating for those accused of witchcraft, an end to this world problem cannot be foreseen. With all other major issues, and the one difference for stopping witch persecutions, is the backing from public health officials. Having the resources, manpower, influence, and research tools, public health officials are the ones needed to tackle this issue. As mentioned above, those who have misinformation or no information look to the supernatural for an explanation on any problem. With modern witch persecutions, we see the pattern of the unknown being connected to medicine. Communities not understanding diseases, medicinal mixture usage, and mental health, look to witchcraft as the only logical blame. If these communities were given a different option for blame, information that the medical community understands, collectively members can begin to switch up their cause and effect for many cases. As public health officials have the medical knowledge to facilitate this change, they are the most important factor in ending modern witch persecutions. This is a necessary step to safeguard communities. As a targeted disease linked to witchcraft persecutions in some communities, HIV is on public health officials' radar. Success with spreading information about this disease can be shown in the story of Nthabiseng, a 26-year-old female.¹⁹⁵ Nthabiseng was an orphaned child due to the death of her

¹⁹¹ Rosenthal, Jill., Johns, Marquisha. "How investing in Public Health will Strengthen America's Health." American Progress. May 2022. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-investing-in-public-health-will-strengthen-americas-health/>

¹⁹² Rosenthal, Jill., Johns, Marquisha. "How investing in Public Health will Strengthen America's Health." American Progress. May 2022.

¹⁹³ Rosenthal, Jill., Johns, Marquisha. "How investing in Public Health will Strengthen America's Health." American Progress. May 2022.

¹⁹⁴ World Health Organization. "World Health Statistics" <https://www.who.int/data/gho/publications/world-health-statistics>

¹⁹⁵ Center for Disease Control. "Protecting the Unprotected." Global HIV and TB, May 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/global-hiv-tb/php/success-stories/protectingtheunprotected.html>

mother by the HIV disease.¹⁹⁶ As a 16-year-old she found refuge in a local program shelter through the CDC.¹⁹⁷ This young woman now works and cares for orphaned children like herself, teaching these children the information she was given on HIV and the prevention of it.¹⁹⁸ Not only is Nthabiseng and the children she cares for, lives turned around, but the future children in those communities are as well. Another success story, of a young man with the need for HIV testing, is also documented on the CDC site. Archibald, a 29-year-old man worried about the unknown of HIV explains the difficulty in getting tested in his community.¹⁹⁹ With the help of CDC-South Africa Public Health Specialist Dr. Rayna Taback-Esra, Archibald was able to get tested.²⁰⁰ Other participants just like Archibald were tested for free right at the town mall, no matter the results all individuals were given information on the disease.²⁰¹ Furthermore, those who did test positive were given medication, others with negative results were taught about prevention.²⁰² Continuing the efforts to spread information about HIV can make an impact on modern witch persecutions as well. Along with this, adding other diseases and factors that contribute to witch persecution can make a huge impact. All factors of witchcraft evidence would fall under public health as all points lead back to a lack of medical knowledge through social determinants of health.²⁰³ Social determinants of health refers to the condition of which people are born, work, grow, and age.²⁰⁴ Harvard University helps us understand this by highlighting, “Public health experts analyze the effect on health of genetics, personal choice, and the environment to develop interventions and policies that protect the health of families and communities, such as vaccination programs and education on the dangers of tobacco and alcohol.”²⁰⁵ With the help of public health professionals spreading information on diseases, mental health, and herbal usage communities can begin to learn the necessary knowledge to not only give an option other than witchcraft as an answer but also eliminate the fear. This path for

¹⁹⁶ Center for Disease Control. “Protecting the Unprotected.” Global HIV and TB, May 2024.

¹⁹⁷ Center for Disease Control. “Protecting the Unprotected.” Global HIV and TB, May 2024.

¹⁹⁸ Center for Disease Control. “Protecting the Unprotected.” Global HIV and TB, May 2024.

¹⁹⁹ Center for Disease Control. “A Young Man in Search of Answers” Global HIV and TB, May 2024.
<https://www.cdc.gov/global-hiv-tb/php/success-stories/searchofanswers.html>

²⁰⁰ Center for Disease Control. “A Young Man in Search of Answers” Global HIV and TB, May 2024.

²⁰¹ Center for Disease Control. “A Young Man in Search of Answers” Global HIV and TB, May 2024.

²⁰² Center for Disease Control. “A Young Man in Search of Answers” Global HIV and TB, May 2024.

²⁰³ Harvard School of Public Health. “What is public health?” Harvard University.
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/communications-guide/what-is-public-health/>

²⁰⁴ Harvard School of Public Health. “What is public health?” Harvard University.

²⁰⁵ Harvard School of Public Health. “What is public health?” Harvard University.

improvement in the health of the world has been proven to work with the examples given above and many more, due to the medical information public health workers are taught and researched.

VI. Conclusion

Through all the cases mentioned above and the hundreds more, we can see that modern witchcraft persecutions are a worldwide issue. The need for intervention is clear in order to keep individuals and communities safe from deadly misunderstanding. Analyzing cases of accused witches from all over the world, we can see a pattern of the lack of understanding of the medical field. Moreover, breaking down the factors that lead to these persecutions one can see the evidence of a witch to be that of either medicinal herb usage, the idea of luck or lack of, and the contraction of certain diseases. Within each factor medical knowledge would be beneficial and in some would completely eradicate the option of witchcraft being at play. Statements made by local individuals, who first-hand experience these witch hunts, gives the outside world a peek at the reasoning and beliefs behind witchcraft accusations. When an entire community is lacking knowledge on a subject, they use what they have readily available to them in an attempt to explain the mysterious. Without the knowledge of previously researched findings at hand, any culture will turn towards their religion. In witchcraft cases this is what is occurring, but fortunately can be solved. With many world health topics under their belt, public health officials have the knowledge and resources to reach these communities. As a main purpose of public health, spreading factual, researched information to all individuals, has been shown in many other cases to improve communities' health. More specifically, as a widely known organization for public health, the World Health Organization is already in the fight against the demonization of HIV. This large part of witchcraft accusations being addressed is already benefiting the public as it is working towards spreading medical information on the symptoms of the disease and prevention of it. As a larger initiative, creating a profile on modern witchcraft, including some of the already worked on topics (such as HIV), awareness of this ever-growing danger can be combated. Reaching misinformed or unknowing communities of medical knowledge is the key to safeguarding these communities. With this mission being taken up by public health officials, a decrease in persecutions of witches has a chance to begin, just as improvement is seen in other

current topics focused on by public health. Knowledge is the power innocent, fearful, suffering individuals need to fight against misguided witchcraft accusations.