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Individuals' are the very essence of a society and therefore, the rights of one American citizen benefits the American community as a whole. Since the beginning of America, Citizens have fought to protect their individual rights. Not only did American citizens add the Bill of Rights to the Constitution, American's still fight every day to maintain the liberties promised in the Bill of Rights. From the petition that every man is equal no matter their skin color to the rights of homosexual marriage, Americans have been and continue to be extremely invested in keeping their undeniable rights separate from the motivation of what is best for the common good. Although American Citizen's individual rights have been tried at times, examples from the McCarthy Era, The Crucible, and American's fight for the Bill Of Rights show that individual rights create a community and ensure the success of America.

One era that showed the importance of individual rights was the McCarthy era.

During this time in the 1950's, communism was a prodigious threat to the American population and the majority of its citizens greatly feared that communism would spread to America. A single man, Joseph McCarthy, led the disparity of the McCarthy era and instilled fear into the American population by taking wrongfully accused communist into questioning without proper cause. McCarthy was able to disregard individual rights because of his strong support from the nation. In fact, his abuse of power became so atrocious that his critiques began to say, "McCarthy was stoking fear and smearing anyone in his path—Democrats or fellow Republicans—purely to grab at power" (Roberts, "The New York Times Upfront"). His reign of power didn't start to dissipate until much later when his supporters began to realize how corrupt Joseph McCarthy's morals were. McCarthy's abuse of power shows that if the common good is the only aspect taken into consideration, people often abuse the power they are given. As a matter of fact, the definition of individual rights is the ability to pursue a life without the interference of other individuals or government. The McCarthy era shows a complete

disrespect for individual rights explained by the definition because the government intruded into the lives of many individuals without probable cause. Therefore, the McCarthy era shows that when individual rights are pushed aside due to fear and deception, people tend to be mistreated when individual rights are discounted in the favor of the common good.

Based on the corruption of the 1690's, a play called the Crucible, set in Salem, Massachusetts depicts the corruption of a community when they disregard individual rights for what they believe to be the common good. The mass hysteria in the village is caused by a group of girls that were caught dancing, an activity strictly forbidden by rules of Christianity at this time. After the girls were caught dancing one of them fell ill and the leader, Abigail, covered up their wrong doings by accusing their slave, Tituba, of witchcraft. These events led to the girls' realization that they could gain power by feigning to be interested in the common good. Abigail's abuse of power, in turn, leads to the execution of many innocent people whose rights had been disregarded. The town so deeply believed the girls lies that Reverend Hale puts all individual rights aside

by saying, "the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!"(Miller 192). By saying this, the Reverend solidifies the girls' power over the town and in turn takes away all individual rights from its citizens. As the play unfolds, people continue to be executed and put into jail based on the unsubstantial evidence from the girls. When the community members begin to notice the error in the conniving girls' ways, John Proctor tries to come forward to testify against the girls. The judges and the preacher quickly throw aside his claims and say John Proctor is trying to overthrow the court and is therefore, delving in the dark arts as well. Coming to a conclusion, the counsel declines Proctor's right for a trial and sentences him to hang as well. These events show from beginning to end that without having strict individual rights, people can influence leaders into thinking selfish motives are what is best for the common good. Therefore, *The Crucible* shows that individual rights are far more important to the American society than only focusing on the common good.

Many of the individual rights denied to the people in *The Crucible* are protected in the United States constitution so that events, like those in the play, do not occur regularly. For this reason, all American citizens have undeniable rights that protect them from the effects of people only considering the common good. Some of these rights include freedom of speech, religion, trial with an impartial jury, and right to petition the government without fear of being prosecuted. These individual rights have been an essential part to the United States since the civil war was fought. The Civil war veterans knew that the bill of rights needed added because they had seen the effects of having someone of higher authority decide what was the common good without paying any heed to individual rights. Therefore, individual rights are more essential to the very foundation of America rather than undermining the essence of what America stands for, in order to appease and satisfy the common good.

Individual rights are shown to be more essential to the American people through examples from the 1950's, *The Crucible*, and America's focus on maintaining individual rights through the Bill of Rights. Through these examples, it is shown that it is more

detrimental for Americans to maintain focus on individual rights rather than what is best for the common good. Americans dedicated their lives to maintaining their individual rights without the mindset of what is best for the common good overshadowing their rights. Their fights for maintaining American's individual rights is shown through wars fought over two hundred years ago, to legal disputes that are occurring today. In fact, our past and our literature shows that when individual rights are no longer taken into consideration, people are hurt and taken advantage of by the greed of others who seek power.

#### Work Cited

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