The Smearing of Joe McCarthy: The lavender scare, gossip, and Cold War politics

Andrea Friedman

American Quarterly

Vol. 57, No. 4 (Dec., 2005), pp. 1105-1129 (25 pages)

Published By: The Johns Hopkins University Press

https://www.jstor.org/stable/40068331

Cite this Item

Read and download
Log in through your school or library

Alternate access options
For independent researchers

Journal Information
American Quarterly represents innovative interdisciplinary scholarship that engages with key issues in American Studies. The journal publishes essays that examine American societies and cultures, past and present, in global and local contexts. This includes work that contributes to our understanding of the United States in its diversity, its relations with its hemispheric neighbors, and its impact on world politics and culture. Through the publication of reviews of books, exhibitions, and diverse media, the journal seeks to make available the broad range of emergent approaches to American Studies.

Publisher Information
One of the largest publishers in the United States, the Johns Hopkins University Press combines traditional books and journals publishing units with cutting-edge service divisions that sustain diversity and independence among nonprofit, scholarly publishers, societies, and associations. Journals The Press is home to the largest journal publication program of any U.S.-based university press. The Journals Division publishes 85 journals in the arts and humanities, technology and medicine, higher education, history, political science, and library science. The division also manages membership services for more than 50 scholarly and professional associations and societies. Books With critically acclaimed titles in history, science, higher education, consumer health, humanities, classics, and public health, the Books Division publishes 150 new books each year and maintains a backlist in excess of 3,000 titles. With warehouses on three continents, worldwide sales representation, and a robust digital publishing program, the Books Division connects Hopkins authors to scholars, experts, and educational and research institutions around the world. Project MUSE® Project MUSE is a leading provider of digital humanities and social sciences content, providing access to journal and book content from nearly 300 publishers. MUSE delivers outstanding results to the scholarly community by maximizing revenues for publishers, providing value to libraries, and enabling access for scholars worldwide. Hopkins Fulfillment Services (HFS) HFS provides print and digital distribution for a distinguished list of university presses and nonprofit institutions. HFS clients enjoy state-of-the-art warehousing, real-time access to critical business data, accounts receivable management and collection, and unparalleled customer service.

Rights & Usage
This item is part of JSTOR collection
For terms and use, please refer to our Terms and Conditions
American Quarterly © 2005 The Johns Hopkins University Press
Request Permissions
Friedman, Andrea, “The Smearing of Joe McCarthy: The Lavender Scare, Gossip, and Cold War Politics,” American Quarterly 57 (December 2005): 1105–29. One could easily translate Friedman's account into the analytical terms that McCoy has described. 15. McCoy, Policing America’s Empire, chap. 9. 16. On this point, see ibid., 12. John Krige has also recently commented on scholars’ failure to recognize the significance of the national security state in the regulation of research in science and engineering fields. Krige, “Regulating the Academic ‘Marketplace of Ideas’: Commercialization, Export Cont Was Joe McCarthy a bellicose, shameless witch-hunter who whipped up hysteria, ruined the reputation of innocents, and unleashed a destructive carnival of smears and guilt-by-association accusations? Were McCarthy and McCarthyism the worst things to happen to American politics in the postwar era? Winner of three book awards, The Lavender Scare masterfully traces the origins of contemporary sexual politics to Cold War hysteria over national security. Drawing on newly declassified documents and interviews with former government officials, historian David Johnson chronicles how the myth that homosexuals threatened national security determined government policy for decades, ruined thousands of lives, and pushed many to suicide. Before the Cold War, there was little panic about closeted gays and lesbians in the federal workforce, at least outside of the military. Homosexuality, which was declared a mental illness by the American Psychological Association in 1952, was merged into the larger gendering of global relations. It was perceived as a threat not just to the family, but to the state and to civilization itself. But by early 1950, when Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy made his sensational (and false) charges that dozens of communists were working in the State Department, the Department already had two investigators

©2000-2020 ITHAKA. All Rights Reserved. JSTOR®, the JSTOR logo, JPASS®, Artstor®, Reveal Digital™ and ITHAKA® are registered trademarks of ITHAKA.

Terms & Conditions of Use
Privacy Policy
Cookie Policy
Accessibility
working to expose and purge homosexuals from the bureaucratic ranks. The stated reasoning was that homosexuals were security risks because they were subject to blackmail. The "Lavender Scare" was a moral panic during the mid-20th century about homosexual people in the United States government and their mass dismissal from government service. It contributed to and paralleled the anti-communist campaign known as McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare. Gay men and lesbians were said to be national security risks and communist sympathizers, which led to the call to remove them from state employment. It was thought that gay people were more susceptible to being manipulated Joe McCarthy and the Red Scare. "We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men--not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular." ~ 3. To further the conversation, project slide 2 of the “McCarthy and the Cold War” Power Point, which features the political cartoon “Fire!” by famous political cartoonist Herb Block. Instruct students to silently examine the cartoon and then discuss: • What do you see?