

2) Free the West Memphis Three

<http://wm3.org/>

Website by supporters of Damien Echols, Jessie Misskelley, and Jason Baldwin, who, as teenagers, were convicted of the 1993 murder of three young boys. They are still in prison. Many believe that they were convicted because they wore black and listened to metal, and because one of them was exploring Wicca.

3) The National Center for Reason and Justice

<http://www.ncrj.org/>

Educational organization and fiscal sponsor of defense committees for various probably-innocent people who were wrongly convicted during the 1980-1995 wave of both Satanic panic and a larger child sex abuse panic. (Contributions to NCRJ are tax-deductible, whereas contributions directly to the defense committees themselves are not.)

4) “The Next Christianity” by Philip Jenkins

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/facts/fm0018.html/>

Reprint of *Atlantic Monthly* article about today’s worldwide religious trends and their implications. Philip Jenkins is a Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University.

5) Against Satanic Panics

<http://againstsatanicpanics.com/>

Website by Diane Vera, the author of this pamphlet, emphasizing recent cases and the impact of "Satanic" panics on religious minorities. Diane Vera has no affiliation with the other websites listed here. Her “Against Satanic Panics” website includes the following section with news stories and other items of interest to Pagans:

To Pagans and occultists

<http://againstsatanicpanics.com/Pagan/>

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“Satanic” panics and the Pagan community

In 1980-1995, there was a worldwide epidemic of probably-false accusations of “Satanic ritual abuse.” The vast majority of the accused were, in all likelihood, not only not guilty, but also not Satanists, and not Pagans either. Most were ordinary mainstream folks, including Christians, Jews, and atheists.

Some Pagans were affected too, including Damien Echols, one of the “West Memphis Three” who were convicted of the 1993 murder of three young boys in an alleged “Satanic ritual.” The “West Memphis Three” are still in prison, although many observers believe that they were convicted for no reason other than their predilection for wearing black and listening to metal, combined with Damien Echols’s exploration of Wicca.

Many other probably-innocent people convicted during the 1980-1995 “Satanic ritual abuse” scare have had their convictions overturned, though many others are still in prison.

During 2003 to 2006, there was a mini-revival of the “Satanic Ritual Abuse” panic – not nearly as bad as the 1980-1995 panic, but it still sent some probably-innocent people to jail – including at least one Pagan, Ian Campbell, who was arrested on the Island of Lewis in Scotland in 2003. The charges against him were dropped for lack of evidence, but he was still guilty in the eyes of many of his neighbors, resulting in a lot of vandalism against his property.

Also during 2002 to 2006, there were some questionable alleged cases involving Roman Catholic priests. For many years before, there was notoriously the opposite problem: Probably-guilty Catholic priests had been unfairly protected by the Church and by local authorities. But then, after the abuse survivors’

movement succeeded in breaking the silence, the pendulum swung the other way, thanks to scaremongering by traditionalist Catholics about an alleged conspiracy of "Satanic pedophiles" who had supposedly infiltrated the Catholic hierarchy. Even some official Catholic spokespeople (such as Jeffrey Grob, Associate Vicar for Canonical Services in the archdiocese of Chicago) endorsed the idea that some Catholic priests secretly perform incredibly bizarre, violent, and messy "Satanic rituals."

How should Pagans respond?

In the past, many Pagans have responded to "Satanic" panics simply by differentiating themselves from Satanists -- in many cases not caring about the ways that Satanists were misrepresented in the popular imagination too, and in many cases adding their own further misrepresentations of Satanism.

But this is not an adequate strategy, even from the point of view of the well-being of Pagans.

As we have seen, the people injured by Satanic panics are not just Satanists and not just adherents of religions popularly confused with Satanism. A sex panic or a "Satanic" panic can harm almost anyone.

Even more importantly, the larger worldwide religious trends of the past few decades have made it more and more difficult for Pagans to avoid being associated with Satan and demons in the popular imagination, despite vast improvements in the mass media portrayal of Pagans. Both here in the U.S.A. and worldwide, the more conservative and intolerant forms of Christianity have grown like wildfire, at the expense of more liberal forms of Christianity.

The fastest-growing forms of Christianity believe, as an essential tenet of their own theology, that *all* non-Christians are *necessarily* either completely delusional or "really" worshipping demons. Because this belief is a built-in tenet of their own

religion, all the Pagan public relations efforts in the world cannot dislodge it. At most you can convince them that you are dealing with Satan and demons out of ignorance rather than deliberately.

On the other hand, nothing in traditional Christian theology necessitates a belief that even Satanists necessarily commit violent crimes. Indeed there have even been some conservative Christian debunkers of the "Satanic Ritual Abuse" scare. The best-known examples are Jon Trott and Mike Hertenstein, who in 1992 wrote an article debunking Mike Warnke's claims.

According to most conservative Christian leaders, Satan's number one goal is *not* to make people as nasty as possible, but merely to lead people away from the particular Christian leader's own dogma, that being sufficient to damn people to eternal hell. Hence their religious doctrines do *not* require them to believe that even Satanists necessarily commit violent crimes, whereas their doctrines do require them to believe that Pagans are necessarily calling upon demons, even if only unwittingly.

Therefore, it is *not* in the best interests of the Pagan community to acquiesce to popular maligning of Satanists. It *is* in the best interests of the Pagan community for Pagans to educate themselves about and debunk "Satanic panics" and to remind people of the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" whenever and wherever such accusations arise, regardless of the religion of the alleged perpetrators.

For more information:

More information, including details about many flimsy alleged criminal cases, can be found on the following websites:

1) Imaginary Crimes: Real Life Cases of People Sent to Prison for Crimes That Never Happened

<http://members.shaw.ca/imaginarycrimes/>

Overview of some of the better-known "Satanic Ritual Abuse" cases.