***Miranda* v. *Arizona* (1966)**

**Key Excerpts from the Dissenting Opinion**

**The case was decided 5 to 4. Justice Harlan, with Justices Stewart and White joining, wrote the**

**main dissenting opinion.**

I believe the decision of the Court represents poor constitutional law and entails harmful consequences

for the country at large. How serious these consequences may prove to be only time can tell. But the

basic flaws in the Court's justification seem to me readily apparent now once all sides of the problem are

considered. . . .

The new rules are not designed to guard against police brutality or other unmistakably banned forms of

coercion. Those who use third-degree tactics and deny them in court are equally able and destined to lie

as skillfully about warnings and waivers. Rather, the thrust of the new rules is to negate all pressures, to

reinforce the nervous or ignorant suspect, and ultimately to discourage any confession at all. The aim in

short is toward "voluntariness" in a utopian sense, or to view it from a different angle, voluntariness

with a vengeance. . . .

Without at all subscribing to the generally black picture of police conduct painted by the Court, I think it

must be frankly recognized at the outset that police questioning allowable under due process

precedents may inherently entail some pressure on the suspect and may seek advantage in his

ignorance or weaknesses. . . .

The Court's new rules aim to offset . . . minor pressures and disadvantages intrinsic to any kind of police

interrogation. The rules do not serve due process interests in preventing blatant coercion since . . . they

do nothing to contain the policeman who is prepared to lie from the start. The rules work for reliability

in confessions almost only in the . . . sense that they can prevent some from being given at all. In short,

the benefit of this new regime is simply to lessen or wipe out the inherent compulsion and inequalities

to which the Court devotes some nine pages of description.

What the Court largely ignores is that its rules impair, if they will not eventually serve wholly to

frustrate, an instrument of law enforcement that has long and quite reasonably been thought worth the

price paid for it. There can be little doubt that the Court's new code would markedly decrease the

number of confessions. To warn the suspect that he may remain silent and remind him that his

confession may be used in court are minor obstructions. To require also an express waiver by the

suspect and an end to questioning whenever he demurs must heavily handicap questioning. And to

suggest or provide counsel for the suspect simply invites the end of the interrogation.

How much harm this decision will inflict on law enforcement cannot fairly be predicted with accuracy. . .

We do know that some crimes cannot be solved without confessions, that ample expert testimony

Attests to their importance in crime control, and that the Court is taking a real risk with society's welfare

In imposing its new regime on the country. The social costs of crime are too great to call the new rules

anything but a hazardous experimentation. . . .

Though at first denying his guilt, within a short time Miranda gave a detailed oral confession and then

wrote out in his own hand and signed a brief statement admitting and describing the crime. All this was

accomplished in two hours or less without any force, threats or promises and…without any effective

warnings at all.

Miranda's oral and written confessions are now held inadmissible under the Court's new rules. One is

entitled to feel astonished that the Constitution can be read to produce this result. These confessions

were obtained during brief, daytime questioning conducted by two officers and unmarked by any of the

traditional indicia of coercion. They assured a conviction for a brutal and unsettling crime, for which the

police had and quite possibly could obtain little evidence other than the victim's identifications,

evidence which is frequently unreliable. There was, in sum, a legitimate purpose, no perceptible

unfairness, and certainly little risk of injustice in the interrogation. Yet the resulting confessions, and the

responsible course of police practice they represent, are to be sacrificed to the Court's own fine spun

conception of fairness which I seriously doubt is shared by many thinking citizens in this country. . . .

Nothing in the letter or the spirit of the Constitution or in the precedents squares with the heavy-

Handed and one-sided action that is so precipitously taken by the Court in the name of fulfilling its

constitutional responsibilities. The foray which the Court makes today brings to mind the wise and

farsighted words of Mr. Justice Jackson in Douglas v. Jeannette: "This Court is forever adding new stories

to the temples of constitutional law, and the temples have a way of collapsing when one story too many

is added."

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**Key Excerpts from the Dissenting Opinion**

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why does Justice Harlan say the *Miranda* warnings are not designed to guard against "police brutality

or other unmistakably banned forms of coercion?”

2. According to Harlan how will the Court’s new rules impair "an instrument of law enforcement that has

long and quite reasonably been thought worth the price paid for it?”

3. Why does Harlan say the Court's new rules are "hazardous experimentation?”

4. This case involves the balancing of individual rights against the desire of society to fight crime. How

do Justice Harlan and Chief Justice Warren differ in how they believe these rights and values should

be balanced?

5. How has reading the excerpts from the majority and minority opinions changed your opinion about

this case?