

America Is Suffering From Tribal Fatigue

By Victor Davis Hanson

I think after 60 years of affirmative action, DEI, racial essentialism, and racial fixation—especially in the United States, but also throughout the Western world, in Europe, Australia, and the former British Commonwealth—we are seeing the consequences.



Supporters of Karmelo Anthony chant outside of the Collin County Courthouse in McKinney, Texas, June 6, 2026. (Juan Figueroa/The Dallas Morning News via Getty Images)

Let me point out that our adversaries, China, Russia, and other places around the globe, don't have this racial essentialism because they believe it is innate to human nature. And when you encourage it, you get something like Rwanda, what's going on now in Nigeria, or what happened in the Balkans.

The natural order of men and animals is that birds of a

feather flock together. So, why would you encourage that instead of having assimilation, acculturation, and integration?

We're suffering from tribal fatigue in the Western world.

All of a sudden, the straws are starting to break the camel's back. We saw the attempted beheading in Belfast by an immigrant from Somalia. We saw [Henry Nowak](#) bleed to death while police watched him bleed and put handcuffs on him because his Sikh immigrant assailant lied and said he was a victim of Henry's racism, which didn't happen.

Here in the United States, we saw Iryna Zarutska, who was murdered on a subway. It was a very eerie video to see her assailant kill her and then see five people, who were also African American, walk right by her corpse. One of them muttered something to the effect that he had killed the white woman.

In addition to this, we've seen an emphasis on race. It seems that every time some of our politicians talk about it, they talk about white, white, white, white, white—always in a pejorative context.

Jasmine Crockett can't finish a sentence without screaming and yelling. There's a whole internet phenomenon now of AI-generated images of people urinating on the grave of Austin Metcalf. [Karmelo Anthony](#) has become a folk hero among parts of the Black community, it seems, and his victim, who was murdered, is somehow portrayed as the villain.

Then we see in the university this idea that we're going to shift from affirmative action to DEI. What I mean is that the old black-white binary would serve a larger purpose by saying that, for the first time in our history, everybody who is nonwhite has some claim against the majority because of their skin color.

You can be an Indian aristocrat, and Indians are, as I keep saying, the wealthiest ethnic group in the United States. You can be a Brazilian aristocrat. You can be anybody who has a claim—whether it's linguistic, religious, racial, or ethnic—that you're not part of the white establishment. Therefore, you expect, even if you're an immigrant, and especially if you're an immigrant, to come to the United States with certain advantages.

But the problem with all this is that the data doesn't support it.

If you look at crimes between nonwhite and white people, depending on the type—whether it's assault, rape, murder, or theft—it can be six, 10, 20, 30, or even 50 times asymmetrical, with nonwhite offenders committing crimes against white victims.

You know that's true because the pool of victimizers is not large enough for the pool of would-be victims.

So, then you get these surreal Orwellian events like Jussie Smollett suggesting that two imaginary MAGA supporters beat him up in the middle of the night. Or Michael Brown, where people around him claimed he was shot in the back and had his hands up, saying, "Hands up, don't shoot"—a complete lie. Or the Duke lacrosse case. Or Al Sharpton and Tawana Brawley.

These stories keep coming.

Why do they keep coming? Because we're no longer a [systemically racist country](#). We're not.

People have learned that if you appeal to the empathy of others and say, "I am a victim," then you can gain preferences in admissions, hiring, retention, and other areas.

The problem with this is twofold.

First, class is completely divorced from race. We are in a

global environment, and we're now 60 to 70 years beyond the civil rights era.

What you're seeing are young people, middle-aged people, and people in their 60s who have grown up only with racial preferences working against them because they are told they have privilege.

But the white population, if you can even call it that, doesn't rank at the top of income. Many Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Arab Americans, and Indian Americans have higher incomes than whites do.

In actual numbers, the largest number of Americans receiving poverty assistance are white people. Think of the people we saw in East Palestine, Ohio, who were largely neglected by the Biden administration when toxic fumes engulfed their community.

The premise of DEI and affirmative action was that if we acknowledged past discrimination and tried to repair it by giving special preferences, avoiding meritocracy, or bringing in people from the so-called Third World, then people in the Western world who identified as white could seek atonement.

The expectation was that this generosity would be reciprocated and would lead to an acculturated, integrated, and assimilated society.

But human nature doesn't work that way.

Whether you're white, black, or brown, it doesn't matter.

If somebody gives you a privilege and removes deterrents from your behavior by saying, "If you do something wrong, we're going to calculate your childhood or the sins of society and exempt you from the full force of the law," then two things happen.

First, people naturally feel contempt rather than gratitude

toward those extending the privilege. They think, "These people have no confidence in their civilization. They have no confidence in themselves."

That's one reason the word "white" is so often used in a negative context. People assume there must be guilt behind DEI, racial preferences, quotas, and endless apologies.

Second, when people are given preferences, their own behavior is no longer scrutinized to the same degree. If you believe there will be no consequences for bad behavior, you're more likely to engage in it.

So, the West embraced this idea that we would bring in millions of people. By the way, we now have 53 million people who were not born in the United States—16% of the population. Both are all-time highs. Some countries in Europe are even higher.

Republicans and conservatives thought they would gain inexpensive labor and that immigrants would work their way up to the middle class. That does happen often, but not necessarily when you bring in 10 to 12 million people in just four years, mostly from poor countries.

The Left, meanwhile, believed nobody really agreed with its agenda. Who would? Men competing in women's sports, open borders, 10,000 illegal immigrants a day, eliminating fossil fuels, and so on.

So, they thought they could import new constituencies. Their counterparts in Europe thought the same thing.

Where are we now?

We're in tribal fatigue.

People have reached the point where, if you say your racial identity—whether you're white, black, brown, or anything else—is essential to who you are rather than incidental,

then you've got the ingredients for tribal warfare.

Unfortunately, the history of mankind is often the history of tribes killing each other.

Let's hope we stop it in time in the United States because tensions are rising, and people are very tired of tribalism—a pre-civilizational concept.

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