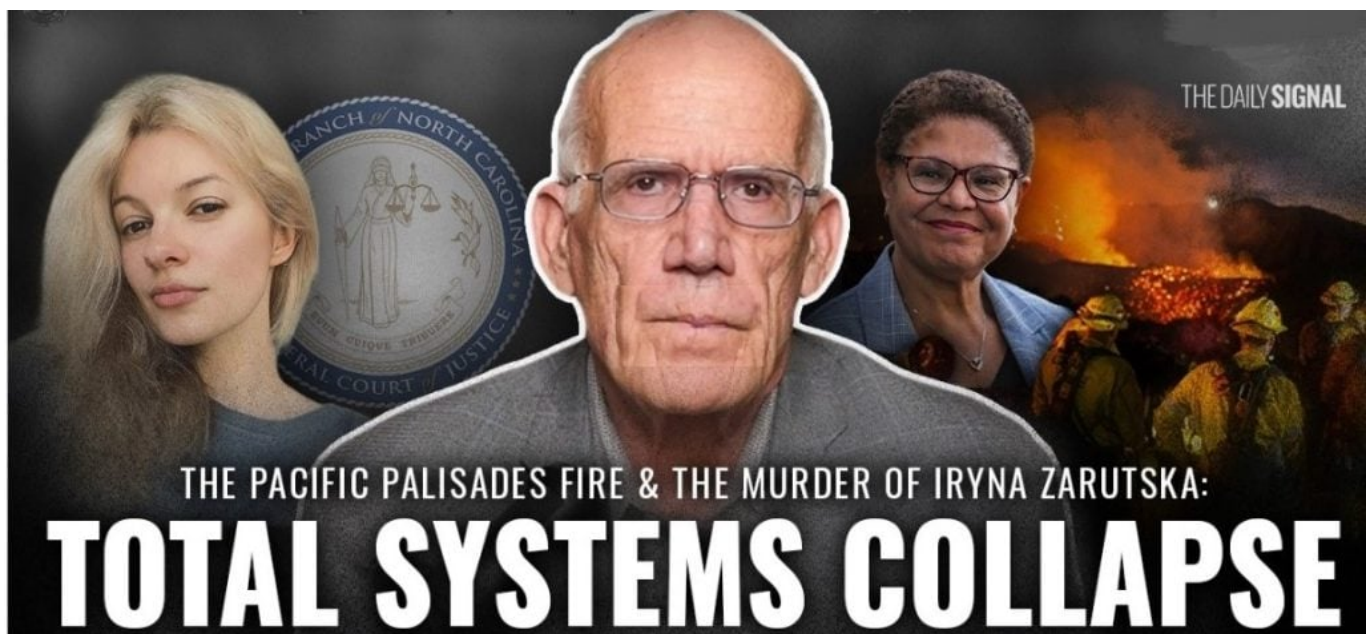


# Signs of a 'Total Systems Collapse' Are Everywhere—Are You Paying Attention?

By Victor Davis Hanson

I'd like to talk about a concept called "systems collapse." Anthropologists use it. Historians use it.



It refers to complex societies that suddenly implode because the level of sophistication and intricacy, bureaucracies become such that it's very vulnerable if some little quirk appears and [the society](#) no longer operates on empiricism, meritocracy, but it's governed by ideology or superstition.

And we usually look at systems collapse in terms of the Mycenaean Greeks, to take one example. Very sophisticated, Linear B tablets, palatial culture, and yet, something went wrong in that concentrated structure of the palace and the entire society collapsed.

We are a very sophisticated society. We require meritocracy, empiricism, credentials. And we have very sophisticated

transportation, education, [health care](#), etc. And if we don't follow the norms that gave us that prosperity, security, and freedom, then the system starts to break down. And we've seen the indices of that.

The Pacific Palisades fire didn't have to happen. It didn't have to destroy the entire beautiful and ancient neighborhood of Palisades. And it didn't have to mean that they haven't even started rebuilding. But when you operate on anti-meritocratic DEI orthodoxies and you have ideologies that overrule common sense and tradition, then you get something like a total systems collapse.

So, the mayor knew it was fire season. She knew that the Santa Ana winds were approaching. She knew that the hills were dry. But she was in Ghana. Why is Ghana important? I guess it has some DEI connection to her.

We know that the hillsides need to be gleaned of brush and cleaned. Green orthodoxy says you can't do that, global warming.

We know that the head of Los Angeles power and water came from PG&E. She was a DEI appointment. And the result was there were fire hydrants that didn't work and there was a reservoir critical to the survival of the Palisades that had been empty for months.

We know that the fire chief herself had her budget cut by Karen Bass, the mayor. But we also know that she kept haranguing people about DEI rather than prioritizing—at least, publicly and in her communiques—the need for preventative fire protection. I could go on about the zoning.

But what I'm getting at is, when you have a sophisticated society living in a fire-prone area with a known two-century history of Santa Ana winds in the late fall and early winter, then nothing can go wrong. It's an unnatural habitat.

And yet, what happened? DEI and green orthodoxy overruled traditions of trial and error, empirical knowledge about how to treat fires, how to prevent them, how to get water to parched areas, how to glean hillsides, why the mayor has to be there, why the deputy mayor—he was under house arrest for phoning in a bomb threat. Why was he even a deputy mayor, someone of that caliber?

Finally, we saw that same systems collapse with the tragic killing of [Iryna Zarutska](#). And everything went wrong.

First of all, why would you enter a light-rail car without having to have a ticket? This was an honor system. It encouraged people to abuse the system—to think that you really don't have to pay anything for a free ride. It said you couldn't have a concealed weapon, but what does that mean when you don't even have security to check people? You can't stop and frisk people, apparently, anymore.

She came in there and there were four people around her, including the assailant. He killed her. But what kind of society is it where the four people adjacent, behind her just walk by her—watch the killer commit this horrific act of cutting her throat. And then after he leaves and he mutters, "Got the white girl," then they don't do anything. They didn't do anything to stop it. They didn't do anything, just to walk a few feet over, a foot over, and try to help her in her death throes.

What ideology is that that allows that to happen?

Why would Van Jones say that this has nothing to do with race when 80% of the people around the killer were African American, as he was, but he selected the one person who was white, and the people around didn't do anything to help her?

Why did the mayor, Vi Lyles, almost immediately say arresting our way out of this won't work, we can't demonize the homeless, we can't show this video?

Why didn't she say, instead—as we know from the history of criminal justice—“We've got to find this perpetrator immediately. We've got to make sure that he faces stiff sentences. We can't let people who are 14-time felons out. This was a mistake. And I promise that won't happen”—why didn't she do it? She didn't do it because she knew that message would not appeal to the constituencies that had elected her. Because it was a total systems collapse.

And finally, Teresa Stokes, the magistrate, why did she let Decarlos Brown Jr., the killer, out? He had 14 felonies. He had just committed a felony. Why did she let him out? And the answer is, the systems collapse.

Why would you have Teresa Stokes, who had never passed the North Carolina bar, as a magistrate? She really had no credentials, in that sense, as a legal expert. More disturbingly, she co-owned an alternate treatment center. So, when she was sentencing felons, convicted felons or felons that were up for trial, she was, in some cases, what? Directing them to a center in which she had a profit motive.

Why did all this happen? Why did the media suppress it, suffocate it? Because it disturbed the narrative.

The narrative was that there is no such thing as inordinate black crime, and to talk about it violates the canons of unempirical or nonempirical [critical race theory](#), critical legal theory, the new anti-racism of professor Ibram X. Kendi.

And the result is that no one wanted to cover the story, even though, had the roles been reversed racially, it would've been a George Floyd moment.

What am I getting at? I'm getting at that in a sophisticated society like the United States, where we have complexities of travel and power and construction and safety and we have a diverse population from all over the world, and we have 55 million people who were not born in the United States residing

here, you don't have a margin of error. And the only way you can succeed, in the way that prior generations have, is to insist on common sense, knowledge of what worked in the past, and meritocracy and empiricism.

But if you throw all that away and you go the superstitious route and adopt [diversity, equity, inclusion](#) mandates in place of meritocracy, or you say that those hillsides are ready to go up in flames, but I can't do anything about them because green orthodoxy says it would be contrary to nature, then you're gonna have a systems collapse. And we saw that in both cases.

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