

Woke DEI + Green Nihilism = Dresden in California

By Victor Davis Hanson

Firebombing on the Pacific



Over 25,000 acres are ablaze in Los Angeles in the Pacific Palisades fire, a veritable living hell.

Some 12,000-plus structures were incinerated. More than 250,000 souls have been evacuated and are in need of shelter.

No one has really taken charge yet. And now even the woke culprits for the catastrophe are blame-gaming each other to determine who was the more incompetent, which in this case translates to the most woke.

No one knows how many have died; all know the number will escalate in the next few days.

The eventual price tag of the ruin will exceed \$200-300 billion and outstrip the billions of dollars given to Ukraine. And there are still some fires that are completely uncontained.

The Los Angeles apocalypse was a multisystem, green-woke collapse—and a disastrous reminder that when Soviet-style, anti-meritocratic ideology permeates all aspects of modern

life in California, disaster is inevitable.

First, note that the culprit of the catastrophe is not climate change; it is not Donald Trump. Those are excuses for arrogant incompetency and disdain for the public. And it is not racism or homophobia to fault those who paraded and virtue signaled their tribal identities so extraneous to their actual responsibilities for public safety.

Note that all California statewide officeholders are left-wing. The California left holds supermajorities in both houses of the state legislature. Only 17 percent of California's huge congressional delegation of 52 seats is Republican. California's judiciary is the most left-wing in the country. There is not a single Republican on the 15-member Los Angeles City Council.

Add it all up, and the woke socialist state has been eagerly deindustrializing, decivilizing, and retribalizing its way into what is now a veritable peacetime Dresden on the Pacific.

Again, there is no one else to blame, because California is one of those rare states in which Republicans have de facto zero political power. All the state media, the legacy newspapers, the Silicon Valley daily online news sites, the Bay Area-based Apple, Google, and Facebook monopolies, and the local news outlets are parrots of the woke-green mindset.

To the degree that anything still works in California, it predates 2000. The core of the ossified Central Valley Water Project and the California Water Project remain—though they are in need of massive maintenance, like almost all the infrastructure the current generation of politicians inherited and largely ignored.

Now crowded and obsolete highways that were once the nation's best still function—but barely. And there are a few remnants of sanity in what is left of the pre-woke and once-great universities of Berkeley, Caltech, Stanford, UCLA, and USC, founded by a now despised but far wiser and more competent long-dead generation of visionaries.

The Real 'Basket of Deplorables'

Los Angeles brags about its new \$50 billion budget and trumpets how it expanded "Care First" programs. Indeed, the mayor's budget claims it created a new "451 positions"—highlighting its investments in "growing the department of youth development."

It boasts it is adding positions to the "Justice, Care, and Opportunities Department," "reducing our jail population," and expanding "voting solutions for all people." There is not much about fire, policing, or water—apparently now the low priorities that prior sexist, racist, and homophobic generations once worried about.

The role of DEI? Mayor Karen Bass was warned of the current danger of dry hillsides of chaparral buffeted by record-high, 100-mph Santa Ana winds. Her response?

She went junketing a continent away to the inauguration festivities of the president of Ghana—a strange way to prepare for a possible inferno to come. Does Ghana have firefighting expertise to share with Bass? In damage-control mode, Bass flew back only to be confronted at the airport by a now rare honest—and thus foreign—reporter.

He asked her why she cut over \$17.6 million from the LA fire service budget—itself just 65% of the city's homelessness expenditures. (She had planned to cut millions of dollars more). And why, he asked, was she in Africa at all in her city's hour of need?

Bass stood mute—shamed into silence.

I think Los Angelenos needed no answer since it was obvious to them: she went to Ghana because she could and wanted to—since identity chauvinism is what ensured she was elected, reelected, and immune from criticism. Look at her appointments and budget, and it is clear public safety, fires, and water are most certainly not her priorities.

Bass was confident that if LA went up in smoke as she pursued her African agendas, the woke megaphones would silence critics as "racist" or "homophobic" or "sexist" in the way Soviet commissars used to send to Siberia any "ideological enemies of the state" who complained that the farms, industries, and

trains of Russia no longer worked. And on spec, we now hear it is now racist to criticize a black woman incompetent mayor.

How about the Bass-appointed DEI “deputy mayor for safety,” Brian Williams?

Surely, he stepped up in the mayor’s absence, given his purview of the city’s “safety?” Nope.

You see, he is currently under suspension for suspicion of phoning in a bomb threat to Los Angeles City Hall.

Well, how about the DEI- and the much-acclaimed “first Latina” director of Los Angeles’s vast waterworks? Bass recruited such talent by nearly doubling the job’s normal salary to \$750,000 per year.

What did she accomplish on her over \$2,000-a-day salary? Did Janisse Quiñones, “the new Chief Executive Officer and Chief Engineer of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and the “first Latina woman to lead the organization,” leap into action?

Well, the water very quickly ran out in Pacific Palisades, and the hydrants went dry—as many had been for months prior.

Quiñones claimed that “three million gallons” in tanks above the suburb were mysteriously not up to the task of quenching the LA Dresden. You think?

She apparently gauges disaster preparation by the number of gallons of water available in tanks, not the number of gallons needed to save thousands of homes and lives. And she forgot to tell the public that in fact there is a 117-million-gallon water reservoir atop Pacific Palisades built for some purpose unknown to her.

Yet it was empty and “under repair” for months because of a mere damaged cover. Consider that: a dry autumn, the onset of the usual Santa Ana winds, a recent plague of hilltop wildfires, and Quiñones shuts down the linchpin of a prior generation’s plan to save the Palisades.

Note Quiñones was supposed to be the professional replacement for a retired director of water and power, who himself had

been a replacement for another director who was found guilty of bribery and is currently in federal prison.

So goes the agency created by water wizard William Mulholland, who once created the 18-million-person Los Angeles megapolis by tapping every river and reservoir he could to feed the city's unquenchable thirst for water.

How about fire chief Kristen Crowley? She now blames the mayor for dry hydrants. But in doing so, she pleaded that her job starts only after water flows out of them—as if their inert condition is not really her concern.

The self-celebrity, nonbinary fire chief Kristen Crowley has talked nonstop for the last two years about “diversity, equity, and inclusion” and the “LGBTU community.” Less was said about the need to ensure the most meritocratic force possible, unmatched equipment, and long preplanned measures to prevent conflagrations—and screaming to high heaven that fire hydrants were either being stolen or bone dry.

Instead, like Bass, Crowley was mostly mute about the lack of preparation or the absence of sufficient warning to those about to be engulfed.

How about her deputy Kristine Lawson, who claimed people in need want to see fire officers arrive who look like they do? And if they don't?

She is also on record with this: “Am I able to carry your husband out of a fire? He got himself in the wrong place if I have to carry him out.” Consider that helpful LAFD logic: So, if you are a man who suffers cardiac arrest and collapses on your kitchen floor, it is your fault that you died without medical attention, not Kristine's, who apparently either would not or could not carry you out the door.

How about morally bankrupt politicians?

The speaker of the California Assembly, Robert Rivas, along with Governor Gavin Newsom, had just called a special session of the legislature to “Trump-proof” California. He wished to allot millions of dollars in state funds—in a year of massive

deficits—to sue and impede the federal government.

Will Rivas's Trump "resistance" session include canceling California's simultaneous request for hundreds of billions of federal dollars for Los Angeles from the Trump administration? When asked whether it was wise to borrow millions to sue Trump while Los Angeles was burning, Rivas mumbled, stuttered, and revealed himself to be little more than a caricature of an incompetent.

Governor Gavin "Nero" Newsom made his usual performance art, virtual-signaling appearance. When asked why the hydrants were dry, he batted it off as a "local problem." He now uses his own campaign website, linked to Democratic fundraising efforts, to warn the fire-struck public about supposed "misinformation."

But what could Newsom do or say? His entire tenure is synonymous with too many catastrophic forest fires and too little water.

He did nothing after the catastrophic Aspen and Paradise fires to revive the timber industry to glean and clean the forests. He never allowed much new grazing on fuel-rich hills or sent crews in to cut back the chaparral.

He never reconsidered his policies of diverting precious snowmelt from the Sacramento River tributaries to flow into the sea to help the delta smelt rather than to ensure that farmers could irrigate their crops or that Los Angeles County reservoirs were fully banked.

Despite an approved 2014 \$7.5 billion bond to build three huge dams and reservoirs, Newsom ensured that we built none: not the easily constructed Sites reservoir, not Temperance Flat, and not Los Banos Grandes, all tertiary foothill reservoirs that could have given California by now nearly five million additional acre-feet of storage.

Or is it worse than that?

Governor Dam-Buster still brags about how he greenlit blowing up four dams on the Klamath River—the largest dam removal in American history. The dams provided 80,000 homes with clean hydroelectric power, farmers with irrigation water, and the public with recreation and flood control.

Instead of following the voters' bond to build reservoirs and dams, Newsom preferred to dynamite them. The ensuing muddy deluge wiped out the surrounding riparian ecosystem.

Joe Biden, now in the last days of his disastrous tenure, was in the LA area by chance to boast that he had put thousands of valuable federal square miles off limits.

Instead, he mumbled about his new great-grandson and relief that his kid's house was saved, as the fire was engulfing 12,000 homes of others. Then Biden unceremoniously left, heartbroken that his last junket to Italy might have to be canceled as Los Angeles continued to burn. Later he too grumbled about "misinformation," which is his synonym for telling the truth about the Los Angeles green woke bomb.

Kamala Harris? Was the vice president perhaps marshaling federal money and assets to stop the fires in her last weeks in office? After all, we remember from her 2024 campaign Harris's frenzied efforts to help out during national disasters, as she scolded the capable Florida governor Ron DeSantis that he was not partnering enough with her to mitigate the effects of flooding.

She too proved invisible other than remarking the fire was "apocalyptic." Instead, Harris was too busy planning a multimillion-dollar junket in her last week in office and of free royal travel.

Insurance? Is there some plan to rebuild these suburbs as they were, to ensure there are some \$300 billion to pay out claims? Well, no again. The state is broke and is driving out insurance companies, not enticing them in. Its public "Fair" unfair insurance plan of last resort is underfunded and will

go insolvent once a week or two of claims flows in.

California's failure to effectively prevent and put out fires—along with hyper-regulation and failure to combat an epidemic of insurance fraud—has destroyed the state's insurance industry. Given the prior inability of homeowners to buy credible fire insurance at any cost, there are thousands of now-homeless who had no insurance at all.

How about the region's large homeless population that camps out on the streets and in the tinderbox chaparral above the suburbs? Did the city investigate arson or detain, arrest, charge, and jail those rounded up with incendiary devices or seen lighting fires? Of course not. They vetoed any notion long ago of an anti-camping ordinance.

Collective Suicide

Add it all up. The California nihilist green ethos and the left-wing politicians who run the madhouse ensured there is no effort to glean the forests and hills of combustible fuel.

There is not enough water for hydrants, not enough to deliver to Los Angeles, and when it arrives, there is too much incompetence to know how to use it.

There were no real warnings to residents that they had mere minutes to flee for their lives. Or was it worse still? As the fires wore on, continuous false alarms of new fires sparked unnecessary and dangerous mass evacuations citywide, destroying what, if any, trust was left in the fire department.

There is no reason to believe that such derelict politicians during the next fire will not again be AWOL on DEI junkets, boasting of their genders, their race, and their sexual orientation, but not of their duties to those whose lives they are sworn to protect.

The final tragic irony?

California's DEI "humanism" and Green New Deal environmentalism ensured the cruelest imaginable treatment of thousands of people and unrivaled destruction of the natural ecosystem.

No one in the government dares to guess about what might have caused the fires, even as they cry "climate change"—as if to do so would expose their own incompetency or confirm rumors of sporadic homeless arsonists.

The California green utopians, by their very ideological zealotry, ensured their fires likely will have released into the atmosphere several weeks' worth of the entire state's collective auto emissions.

The fires will have wiped out thousands of protected flora and fauna, will have released toxic fumes into the air, and will have destroyed the lives of thousands of Los Angeles residents for years to come.

To paraphrase a 1960s California left-wing slogan—green-woke is not healthy for children and other living things.

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