

Incel: The Death Spiral of Identity Politics

The incel movement (short for “involuntarily celibate”) movement has been linked to [a recent mass killing, mainly of women, in Toronto](#). On April 23, 25-year-old Alek Minassian drove a van through a suburban business district, killing eight women and two men and injuring 16 others.

The spark for the movement – if you can call it that – was a mass murder in 2014 by 22-year-old Elliot Rodger. He killed six people and injured 14 others before shooting himself. Subsequently, his ravings on YouTube and in a 107,000-word manifesto in which he complains that he had been “forced to endure an existence of loneliness, rejection and unfulfilled desires all because girls have never been attracted to me”.

His sentiments seem to have struck a chord with other young men who rant on internet sites about their inability to have relationships with women. Minassian even posted on Facebook that “the Incel Rebellion has already begun” shortly before his attack.

Incels are sexually frustrated men hostile toward sexually successful men and towards women. These are called [Brads and Staceys](#) in incel jargon, words that suggest worldly, well-adjusted people who have no trouble getting mates.

What makes such a dark and destructive movement possible?

That many young men are sexually frustrated, and can be dangerous, is not news. But an incel movement, or as it is sometimes called an incel rebellion, is something new. Is it conceivably true that no one has a right to be surprised by the claim that we have a right to sexual satisfaction, even if not to a particular partner, and are entitled to use violence if it is denied.

We live in a world in which tiny groups have enormous ability to make trouble, and to exploit the rhetoric of rights to further their agendas. [Jeff Charles puts the issue](#):

Identity politics is rooted in the idea that one group is the victim of another group's wrongdoing. Those who embrace identity politics carry a mindset of victimhood and a deep sense that they are being deprived of something to which they are entitled ... One of the most harmful aspects of identity politics is that ... victimhood becomes a sort of filter that forces the individual to see oppression and bigotry even in areas where it doesn't exist.

Identity groups are tribes organized for war. "Intersectionality" might mitigate the danger of identity politics: if a man can be at once gay, Hispanic, and a Roman Catholic, then none of these identities will fuel a civil war. But its effect in practice, as [Amy Chua puts it](#) in her recent book *Political Tribes*, is "dividing people into ever more specific subgroups created by overlapping racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation." And hostilities quickly arise within coalitions of "diverse" groups: many gay men are hostile to transpeople, and urge their movement to "[drop the I.](#)"

Even in a scrupulously liberal democratic state, an individual is as much a subject rather than citizen as if he lived in an absolute monarchy. In America, it is a case of one person against 323 million. Each of us needs allies, to protect us against the state. And, though we might all be better off without identity politics, a group that fails to organize itself around an identity is in a parlous position like a group without a militia in a country full of them. A politics centered on our common humanity, and the common good of all the members of the communities in which we find ourselves, is easy to wish for but difficult to create.

In such a world, it is no surprise that sexually frustrated men, even though they are too young to “swallow the black pill” and give up on women, should demand affirmation for their identity, claim that their rights are violated if it refused, and then take the law into their own hand. For they live in a culture that celebrates sexual freedom, and are caught in a web created by their lack of a father to teach them how to be men, a persistent message that they are potential rapists, and female sexual cruelty. As incel member [Jack Peterson said](#), “When you ... are getting ... humiliated by women constantly and are told to both “man up” *and* renounce your masculinity... the one bright light you see is this [incel] community.”

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