

Are We Becoming a Victimocracy?

Most of us learned—or should have learned—in school that the United States is a republic, not a democracy. Therefore, we do not have direct rule by the *demos*, the “mob” of common people, but by elected representatives and leaders.

Of course, some cynically deny that our nominal governments actually rule. Our “real” rulers, they usually think, are oligarchs of some sort, people who get their way by buying politicians. But what if all that is becoming irrelevant?

It’s at least plausible to suspect that a relatively new and poorly understood phenomenon called *victimocracy* is taking hold of politics in the Anglosphere.

That’s a thesis of Professor Eric Gans, whose [faculty page](#) describes him as “Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the UCLA Department of French & Francophone Studies whose primary research interests include Generative Anthropology / Originary Thinking.” The word victimocracy was apparently [coined](#) by Gans’ colleague and co-author Adam Katz. Gans first [described](#) the concept on his own blog “Chronicles of Love and Resentment” five years ago, and has regularly sounded the theme since. This past week at *First Things*, theologian Peter Leithart wrote of “[clashing victimocracies](#)” as the new, predominant theme of our political life. But how does such a paradoxical concept as victimocracy—i.e., *de facto* rule by victims—gain energy and become possible?

Let’s consider the matter first from the standpoint of leftist identity politics, then from that of rightist identity politics, the latter of which is largely a reaction against the former.

On the Left, we are familiar with the idea that historically oppressed groups—such as women, people of color, and the sexually deviant—need special protection and preferential treatment. This special treatment often plays out in “hate

crime" laws and "diversity" imperatives in the academic and business worlds. But it's often not noticeable that we are expected to take these people at their word about things, simply because they are members of accredited victim groups.

Thus, outside the courtroom we must simply "believe women" when they make sexual-assault allegations, even in the absence of corroborating witnesses or material evidence, and even if their story changes. If we don't, we're "rape apologists."

We must set aside the usual investigative processes and just believe would-be asylum-seekers that they are fleeing persecution and can only be safe in the United States. If we don't, we're "racists."

We must set aside obvious physical facts and just believe people who say their real sex is other than their natal sex. If we don't, we're "transphobes."

In essence, official victim status is taken to merit instant credibility, and thus power—or at least power for those who *think* such status merits instant credibility. After all, historic injustices must be righted—mostly at the expense of the white, Christian, heteronormative patriarchy.

On the Right, it doesn't take long to notice that white-nationalist and alt-right sentiments are more febrile and less marginal than they used to be. There's a palpable sense that "they"—feminists, illegal non-white immigrants, the sexually deviant, welfare queens, social-justice warriors, and so on—are the barbarians pouring over the gates to destroy Western civilization.

Many people on the Right who think this way belong to President Trump's "base." One can debate whether he is more an effect or more a cause of such sentiments. But it cannot be denied that he expresses a growing sense among his supporters that all which "makes America great" is under threat, and that those who know and represent what makes America great—typically, white men—are themselves victims of the officially accredited victims.

It does seem that a sense of aggrievement drives much of today's politics.

A century-and-a-half ago, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was eloquent in his loathing of what he called the attitude of “resentment” and its corresponding “slave morality.” He identified that as Jewish and Christian in origin and proposed to counteract it with the ideal of the *Übermensch*, who would define all values out of his vital energy, his will-to-power, instead of relying on a dead and enervating God.

Nietzsche’s attitude was not entirely without foundation. The biblical theme of God’s advocacy on behalf of the *anawim*—the poor, the otherwise lowly, and the marginalized—and his coldness toward the powers-that-be was indeed expressed in the Virgin Mary’s rejoicing, while pregnant with Jesus, that God had “cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly” (Luke 1:52).

But that verse has a spiritual meaning which, I would argue, gets turned on its head when translated into politics in the form of victimocracy. As Leithart explains, the success of victimocracy would guarantee its failure: the victims, or those who style themselves victims, inevitably become the victimizers.

Let’s tone down the victim-playing, shall we?

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