

CENTENNIAL REVIEW

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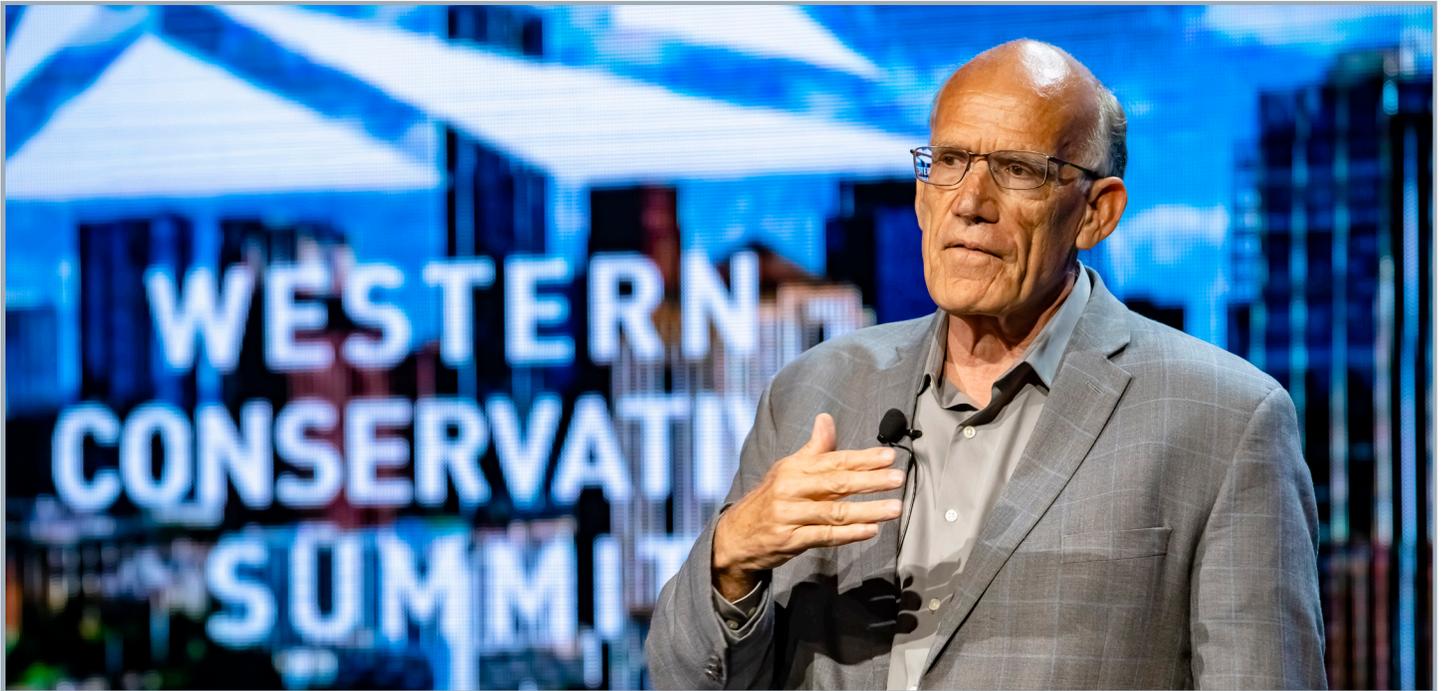


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THE DYING CITIZEN: HOW PROGRESSIVE ELITES, TRIBALISM, AND GLOBALIZATION ARE DESTROYING THE IDEA OF AMERICA

Dr. Victor Davis Hanson, The Hoover Institute



Victor Davis Hanson, Ph. D., senior fellow at The Hoover Institute at Stanford University, speaking at the 2021 Western Conservative Summit

The problems we are worried about in the age of wokeness, censorship, de-platforming, and election integrity have to do with citizenship. Citizenship is a rare idea throughout history, and we are losing it.

The events of 2020 were the catalyst. The Left has been in the process of fundamentally transforming America, but their efforts were slow moving. Suddenly in 2020, they were reified quickly. Why was that? We experienced a perfect storm of events we never expected. The result? We are strangers in a strange land.

To start, we had our first global pandemic in one hundred years. Our generation and our parents have never experienced a pandemic. The so-called Spanish flu of 1918-1919 killed five hundred thousand Americans at a time when the population was about one-third what it is today. Not that COVID-19 was not serious, but in today's terms, the Spanish flu would have killed one-and-a half million.

To this day, the media has not reported the origins of the COVID-19 virus. We know it originated in Wuhan, and that it was impermissible to say there was a connection between the Wuhan lab and the origins of the virus. That is no

longer tenable. Had we known that the lab was integral to the genesis of this pathogen, we might have acted differently and saved lives.

We have never had a national quarantine. This country has faced typhus, typhoid, and yellow fever, but lockdowns were local or regional. Remember, it was envisioned as flattening the curve for two weeks, but then the quarantine went on and on. What happens when you lock down 330 million people? We saw spikes in family abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse, and suicides. We denied people access to healthcare and saw increased rates of cancer and heart disease. And that does not even mention keeping 50 million children out of school.

We were originally told that masks were of no utility, then that they were essential, and then that we needed to wear two masks. We were told that herd immunity of 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 percent was necessary before we could go back to normal.

Centennial Institute sponsors research, events, and publications to enhance public understanding of the most important issues facing our state and nation. By proclaiming Truth, we aim to foster faith, family, and freedom, teach citizenship, and renew the spirit of 1776.



Victor Davis Hanson, Ph. D., senior fellow at The Hoover Institute at Stanford University, speaking at the 2021 Western Conservative Summit about his upcoming book, *The Dying Citizen: How Progressive Elites, Tribalism, and Globalization Are Destroying the Idea of America*, which details how the concept of “citizen” was among America’s most valued ideals for over two centuries, but is now at risk as progressives lunge for power.

Never did we think that the medical establishment who advised us could be compromised, but federal dollars had been routed through a nonprofit called Echo Health to the Wuhan lab. Why? Gain of function research. We were not told any of that. Now we find ourselves in a self-induced recession. They shut down the economy, but even that was odd. If you owned a pornographic shop in California, you could stay open, but the gun store and the church were shut down. If you were a mom-and-pop shoe store, you were nonessential, but Target was open to sell shoes.

Small businesses were shut down while Walmart, Target and Amazon saw their businesses grow. It was the greatest twelve-month period of income redistribution we have ever seen. And yet, the media covered this news as if it were normal.

2020 was an election year. While the Constitution specifies that state legislatures shall have the primary responsibility to set rules for a national election, last year, in swing states across the country, people sued in the courts and made administrative and bureaucratic fiats, edicts, and diktats to change our election rules. They changed early voting, adding 20, 30, 40 days to vote. They changed the cutoff date for absentee ballots to be mailed in, adding 10, 12, 15 days to vote. Improper signatures were allowed, addresses did not have to be verified, and the result was that sixty-three percent of the electorate did not vote on Election Day.

We rendered Election Day a construct. Whoever won the final debate, it did not matter because 60 million people had already voted. The error rate dropped from the usual of about four percent down to about .4 percent. With 102 million people taking advantage of mail in and early voting, and by lowering the rate of rejection, we added about four million additional ballots, which could have made a big difference.

Citizenship is a rare idea throughout history, and we are losing it.

If you mentioned how these changes affected the election, you could be charged with fomenting disbelief in the integrity of the election, and your career could be in jeopardy. You did not have to mention conspiracies or the Kraken; there was simply no tolerance for discussion.

Then, there is the notorious assault that we all deplored on January 6. We were told it was the greatest attack on the Capitol since early Civil War raids. Pearl Harbor was an attack on the U.S., 9/11 was an attack, but there were no references to those after January 6. Instead, we heard conspiracy theories about an armed insurrection, but none of that turned out to be true. We have not found anything that shows a conspiracy. Instead, there was a guy with cow horns, and nothing was organized. Nobody who was arrested had or used firearms. We were told that five people were killed, but that was exaggerated. Four did not die violently. Only one, Ashli Babbitt, a 14-year military veteran, was shot by a Capitol Police officer. Maybe you could say she was committing a felony, but she was shot and she was unarmed.

Following the protocols of 2020, if you shoot an unarmed suspect, that officer's picture is flashed all over the country in a nanosecond. But to this day, we don't know who killed Ashli Babbitt.

We had 120 days of rioting, protests, demonstrations, violence, and looting last summer. It was a level of civil disobedience we have never seen before: \$2 billion dollars in damage, twenty-five people killed, and at least 14,000 people arrested. We have never had that level of insurrection with complete immunity from the authorities. We watched a police precinct with police in it and a federal courthouse attacked, and civil authorities did not step in to protect them. In fact, the Portland mayor said they don't worry about brick and mortar.

Property, remember, was the essence of the U.S. Constitution. Consensual societies start out with the idea that if you cannot hold your property and pass it on to your children, you have no government.

All this created a climate of crisis, and out of that crisis, long, stewing elements that were eroding citizenship came to the fore.

What were those? The middle class has been hemorrhaging for about 40 years. By 2017, they had lost real wages for twelve consecutive years. About half of the country will die with a net worth of less than \$10,000. We were making gains in homeownership up to 62 or 63 percent, but now we are going backwards. The percent of a family budget necessary for a mortgage payment is at an all-time high.

We are raising a cadre of young people who collectively owe \$1.7 trillion dollars in student loans that will never be

paid back. The universities charge above the rate of inflation for housing, room and board, and tuition. Now, our young people cannot afford to buy a house.

The age in which people in America are getting married has gone from 23-25 to 28-29. The number of children per American family has dropped in just twenty years, from 2.1 down to 1.8. We have a generation in suspended animation, prolonging adolescence, and eschewing the conservative traditional incentives that make somebody grow up. Think of your spouse and your family first and put off spending because you have those responsibilities. These have been postponed and are now in some ways irrelevant.

The "Life of Julia" commercials during the Obamacare debate and the "Pajama Boy" commercials have persuaded us to be under government care from the day we are born until the day we die. That is a radical change. We are peasants. We are not a middle-class society.

We are residents now. It used to be that people who lived under an emperor or king were either a serf or a subject, a slave or a resident. The idea that you were a citizen with inalienable rights was a radical idea invented in classical Greece 2,500 years ago. The Greeks said citizenship is based on middle people; a middle class between masters and serfs.

Today, we have twenty million residents in the United States who are not citizens, and this year we are on a schedule to have one million people come into the United States under illegal auspices, with no legal ramifications, and no plan for assimilation or integration. They come without English, without education; like an unassimilated blob.

It used to be we had citizenship rights, and residents who are here illegally did not have all of those rights. But today, I cannot get off the plane in my home state of California without my passport, but if I fly into Mexico, I can walk across the border. Same with entitlements. Anybody can get federal entitlements, citizen or resident. That has put tremendous pressure on the system. We have citizens who cannot get healthcare because the services are being swamped by people who are residents.

The progressive project wants to accentuate this rise in residency. There used to be clear distinctions: residents cannot vote, only citizens can vote. Now, in many places residents and even illegal residents can vote. It used to be that you had to be a citizen to work in a political campaign, but now green-card holders and many who are here illegally are working in



campaigns. The only thing left of citizenship is the right to hold office, and even that is being questioned. Only citizens should be able to vote and run for office.

Another premodern idea that is returning is tribalism. Remember, tribalism is the natural order of things and innate to humans. People identify by the way they look superficially. Martin Luther King's idea that it is the content of our character and not the color of our skin was radical. Our race should be incidental, not essential to who we are. Instead, tribalism is returning, as we see in critical race theory and wokeness, and it is fatal to the idea of citizenship in a multiracial society.

Finally, there is a postmodern assault on citizenship by the academic, legal, and political worlds. One example is the rise of people who are not elected or accountable. We have about two million people in federal and state government who have not been elected, and yet they make more laws than the state and federal legislatures. As the Romans worried, who will police the police?

We cannot vote for people in the administrative state, but they are the most powerful people in the world. Think of men in the justice and intelligence communities who made the news over the last four years. Men like James Comey, Robert Mueller, Andrew McCabe, John Brennan, and James Clapper, all lied under oath multiple times without any repercussions.

It is scary to have bureaucracies doing this. We have created a government octopus that is strangling citizenship.

These are sophisticated legal and academic minds who do not like the Constitution, liberty, freedom, or equality. They like equity instead, where everybody is going to be equal on the back side.

Alexis de Tocqueville talked about this in *Democracy in America*. One of his greatest fears was that human beings, if

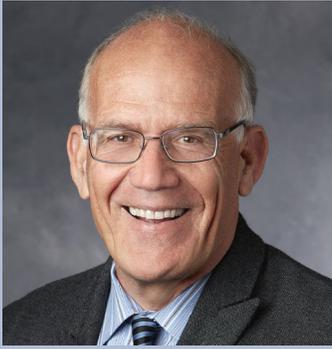


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- Jeff Hunt, Director



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Dr. Victor Davis Hanson is the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution; his focus is classics and military history.

Hanson has written or edited twenty-four books, the latest of which is *The Case for Trump* (2019). He is the author of hundreds of articles,

book reviews, and newspaper editorials on Greek, agrarian, and military history and essays on contemporary culture. He is a syndicated columnist for Tribune Media Services, a weekly columnist for the *National Review Online*, and a regular commentator on Fox News.

Hanson received a BA in classics at the University of California, Santa Cruz (1975), was a fellow at the American School of Classical Studies, Athens (1977–78), and received his PhD in classics from Stanford University (1980).

they had the chance to be wealthier with more inequality, they would choose to all be poor and everybody have the same. That is a dangerous tendency of human nature and republics must react to it. Today's evolutionaries want to make us equal. One way to do that is by changing our government, getting rid of the Electoral College, the tradition of the filibuster in the U.S. Senate, the nine-person Supreme Court, and even the structure of the U.S. Senate with two senators per state.

If you dig into their legal analysis, they want us to evolve from a republic into a society where they can get what they want with fifty-one percent of the vote.

There is a final postmodern threat to citizenship in globalism. Their goal is for us to be citizens of the world.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg once said, "I don't understand, why are we sticking so assiduously to the U.S. Constitution? We could learn a lot from the Constitution of South Africa." When we signed the Paris Climate Accord, the Obama press secretary was asked about signing a treaty without a two-thirds majority ratifying in the U.S. Senate. He responded: "Why would we turn our responsibility over to those guys? They don't believe in climate change." When we signed the Iran deal, another treaty, they bypassed the Senate again, and Ben Rhodes said it was very easy to do. "Reporters are just young people who know nothing. We created an echo chamber; they just reported what we wanted, that it wasn't a treaty, and everybody bought it."

They believe Americans should be subject to the International Criminal Court. They imagine Americans being judged by a panel of Iranians, North Koreans, and Cubans who can adjudicate whether war crimes were committed in Afghanistan.

These people believe the international community is more sophisticated than us. They do not have to do stupid things like the First and Second Amendments. They're not crazy and oppose abortion as we do.



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There is an enormous pressure from the left to harmonize what we are doing in the United States with what is the norm at the United Nations and the European Union. They would set our economic policies in synchronization with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. At the G7, they adopted a 25-page statement to harmonize or regularize our system, including implementing a global corporate tax rate of fifteen percent on multinational corporations.

During the 2020 presidential election, Michael Bloomberg said California is our goal, the ideal. As a sixth-generation Californian, I would say the opposite. California is our dystopia. California has no middle class; the middle class has moved to Colorado, Texas or Florida. It has an open border and at least twenty-seven percent of the state was not born in the United States. These immigrants came here illegally, are not interested in integrating, do not learn to speak English, and have little education.

California is a tribal state where everybody is self-selecting by their tribe. That is how people survive. They go back to their premodern affinities, and it is all of us each according to his station.

I don't think it works anymore. We have tried keeping silent. Now, we have to speak out. We have to stand for this republic and not give up on our citizenship just because the bullies say our country was no good from the beginning. It's a good country. It is better than the rest. We all need to say it. ■



Watch the complete speech on Centennial Institute's YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y66u_zSNoIE&t=1147s