VICTIMISM: ANOTHER BAD IDEOLOGY

by Howard Rotberg

"Victimism uses the ideology of concern for victims to gain political or economic or spiritual power."
—René Girard, Christian philosopher

Girard sees victimism as a somewhat intentional method of gaining power.

But victimism can also refer to the ideology of blaming, consciously or unconsciously, one's misfortunes on somebody else's misdeeds. In that sense, it is an ideology that more or less intentionally interprets facts through a lens of values and culture.

Victimism is an *ideology*. The *New World Encyclopedia* states

that "an ideology is a set of ideas, beliefs, or stances that determines a perspective with which to interpret social and political realities." It gives a more detailed definition of a "political ideology" in social studies:

> "A political ideology is a certain [ethical](#) set of ideals, principles, doctrines, [myths](#) or symbols of a [social movement](#), institution, [class](#), or large group that explains how society should work, and offers some political and cultural blueprint for a certain social order. A political ideology largely concerns itself with how to allocate power and to what ends it should be used. Some parties follow a certain ideology very closely, while others may take broad inspiration from a group of related ideologies without specifically embracing any one of them."

The ideology of victimism is often associated with concepts like *victim mentality, victimhood* and/or *victimization*.

"Victims" therefore might haves similarities as a group relating to *skin colour, gender, ethnicity, economic class, religion, indigeneity,,* or *cultural/ political values*.

Those within the culture of victimism blames their victim status on those who they perceive have *wrongly* usurped the privilege and power that they crave. Therefore, one sees victimism among groups who in fact have more power than they ever have had. The best example is that of American blacks. Nowhere in the world do black people have a higher standard of living and cultural prominence than in America. But extremely rich America athletes, entertainers, religious leaders, and other cultural icons conduct themselves as victims, due to historical wrongs against them. Is it from a sense of guilt that they think that they might have benefited unduly? Is it utilized as an evasion of personal responsibility to do good by blaming others, by scapegoating others?

And so our intellectual discourse, based in the victimism of

the universities, now concentrates on who has privilege and who has power. There seems little sensitivity that actions to benefit perceived historical victims, especially of race, religion and gender, might actually be creating new classes of victimhood for those lacking the power to maintain their alleged privilege. For example, are white working class and middle class men now put to the "back of the bus" in terms of their priority and benefits when only "Black Lives Matter" and only women are to be "believed"?

Only with victimism can a great American jurist like Brett Kavanaugh be subject to a twisted legal procedure with uncorroborated allegations which are deemed legitimate only because we are to "believe" all women and thus not believe such an accomplished and reputable judge.

Will there be exclusion of white men — through acknowledged discrimination and bias — to drive them to political extremism as they have no respectable political or cultural outlets?

The election of Donald Trump (and the elites' legal and illegal attempts to destroy him) marked a turning point in modern American history. The totalitarian enforcers of Political Correctness had a fit.

In the election of 2016, the white middle class (both men and women) rebelled against the media, the university professors, the well-paid directors of the vast NGOs, and public sector, and voted for Donald Trump.

In fact, CNN's Van Jones, perhaps sensing that his ride through government and media positions (despite the supposed disadvantage of being black) might be in jeopardy snapped during the election coverage on CNN and called the result a "white-lash."

For at least eight years, the working class/middle class were told that the Western values of individual human rights, Judeo-Christian values of Justice, what is right or wrong, and

in fact what is Good versus Evil is all passé.

Multiculturalism and worship of diversity and protection of arbitrarily chosen disadvantaged groups from having their feelings hurt by free expression by traditionalists, resulted in the spoiled classes of "woke" folks protesting in the streets the results of a free election in one of the world's great democracies. But when Trump supporters protested alleged fraudulent election results in 2020, and they protested at Capitol Hill, they were told that their protest was an "insurrection" and non-violent protestors who had no weapons were arrested and put in jail without charges, without bail, and in solitary confinement. Who were the victims?.

When university students are taught that they need "safe spaces" to protect against "micro-aggressions" and from "offensive" speech, we are training students to be perpetual victims and whiners.

In the culture of victimism, the power accruing to victims can be envied and cause fraudulent self-identities, such as Elizabeth Warren's claim in her application papers for a position at Harvard, that she had Native background, or the two cases of white women appropriating to themselves the advantages of being black: firstly, the infamous case of Rachel Dolezal, an activist within the Black community who was exposed in 2015 by her own parents as being a white woman who had invented a Black identity for herself; secondly, in 2020, an activist and historian, named Jessica Krug, admitted that she pretended to be a Black woman for years, although she was a white Jewish woman.

Note how she explains her appropriation: "I have not only claimed these identities as my own when I had absolutely no right to do so — when doing so is the very epitome of violence, of thievery and appropriation, of the myriad ways in which non-Black people continue to use and abuse Black identities and cultures — but I have formed intimate

relationships with loving, compassionate people who have trusted and cared for me when I have "use and abuse Black identities and cultures." And so pretending to be black is reduced to a situation where she was oppressing the victim she wanted to be.

Are "oppressors" still oppressors when they pretend to be part of the victim class? Isn't this the same of upper middle class college professors or Bernie Sanders posing as Marxists because that is the woke thing to do? Marxism, especially, during Stalin's rule created millions of victims. Victim wannabes, in my opinion, are suffering from another bad ideology — masochism.

As Conor Friedersdorf, writing in *The Atlantic* on September 11, 2015, puts it, victim culture is neither honor culture or dignity culture. ("The Rise of Victimhood Culture") Citing the work of sociologists, Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning that honor culture is not victim culture, he writes:

> "Honorable people are sensitive to insult, and so they would understand that microaggressions, even if unintentional, are severe offenses that demand a serious response," they write. "But honor cultures value unilateral aggression and disparage appeals for help. Public complaints that advertise or even exaggerate one's own victimization and need for sympathy would be anathema to a person of honor."

But he argues that victim culture is also not a dignity culture. He writes:

> "Members of a dignity culture, on the other hand, would see no shame in appealing to third parties, but they would not approve of such appeals for minor and merely verbal offenses. Instead they would likely counsel either confronting the offender directly to discuss the issue, or better yet, ignoring the remarks altogether."

In individual psychology, there is much study of what is termed "victim mentality," an acquired [person](#)al trait in which a person tends to recognize or consider themselves as a victim of the negative actions of others, and to behave as if this were the case in the face of contrary evidence of such circumstances.

A question then, is how individual personality traits like victim mentality broaden to include large groups of people. The term "victimism" can be used when individual feelings of victimhood begin to affect the entire social and political culture and become the tendency of blaming the misfortunes of one's group on another group's alleged misdeeds.

Victim mentality is primarily developed, for example, from family members and situations during childhood. Similarly, criminals, especially those whose parents are criminals, often engage in victim thinking, believing themselves or their group to be moral and engaging in crime only as a reaction to an immoral world that gives no respect to their race, religion, gender, or ethnicity. A victim identity seeks compatible and encouraging attitudes in others and thus promotes victimism.

The person with a victim mentality believes that he or she deserve sympathy, or at the very least, empathy, with such a belief strengthened by others with this mentality. If those others have some power to set cultural norms, then victim mentality gradually extends to the group and becomes a culture or ideology of victimism.

It is interesting to study which individuals, small or moderate sized groups and which large groups adopt victimism.

The Holocaust with its murder of six million Jews and its enslavement in concentration camps or many more, should have created a massive victimism. But it didn't. Many of the survivors were just glad to be admitted to western countries with no exterminationist forms of antisemitism. My father, who

lost his parents and eight year old sister to the gas chambers of Auschwitz, for the first 25 years of my life seldom talked about what happened and by whom and to whom. Admitted into Canada and given the chance to create a small business and to be judged for his character and accomplishments rather than only his Judaism, he did not complain and cast aside his role as a victim.

Interestingly, something similar happened to the concentration camp survivors who got around British restrictions and immigrated to Israel, only to find themselves a few years later fighting a war against the Arabs who rejected the international law legitimizing the Jewish state. But it was the Israeli government and elites who refused to grant their co-religionists victim status. That was because the prevailing ideology was that Israel was founded by a "new Jew," one that embraced agriculture and other tasks of growing a state, rather than being oppressed and unable to fight back as they were limited to Jewish ghettos and few were in a position to fight back. The Israeli Jews, especially the ones who immigrated in the early 1900s, were often socialist and secular in orientation and knew how to use weapons to defend themselves. No longer victims, they rejected victimism for self-reliance and responsibility.

The religious ones also rejected victimism because the Torah taught personal responsibility, righteousness, and justice, not the scapegoating of other people.

Contrast the lack of victimism among Jews with the extensive victimism alleged by many Muslims who call it "Islamophobia." A "phobia" is an irrational fear but many who seek to gain power for Muslims as a result of supposed oppression in America fail to remember that the radical Islalmists among them, have in fact been drawn to support Islamist terrorism, jihad, a world wide caliphate and oppression of women and girls and gays within Islam. That is not a phobia, but realism. So a reluctance to grant unrestricted immigration to

those who should be vetted for Islamist tendencies, is not a phobia and should not conduce to victimism.

One of the worst aspects of victimism is that it attempts to gain more power by linking one supposed victimization to another in what is called "intersectionality." Such common cause creates some strange, even despicable bedfellows, such as Black Lives Matter and Islamists and other supporters of the so-called Palestinians. When Hamas starting firing thousands of missiles at Israeli civilians in May, 2021, Black Lives Matter was quick to make an intersectional statement: "BLM stands in solidarity with Palestinians. We are a movement committed to ending settler-colonialism in all forms and will continue to advocate for Palestinian liberation."

Unfortunately, the Hamas Charter calls for the genocide of the Jewish people in Israel. And so, BLM stands for genocide and against the Israeli efforts to promote Arab Israeli rights in its parliament, in medicine and other professions, in education and sports.

Victimism is evil when it seeks genocide. BLM was wrong to torch businesses, police stations and undertake violent riots. It is too easy to let your victimism distort your morality. Sure blacks were enslaved and treated horribly. But a Civil War was fought against slavery, the slaves were emancipated, and it took many years for Martin Luther King and other great men to seek and receive Black Civil Rights. We cannot forget that a Black man served two terms as President and a Black woman (in both cases one-half Black) is the present Vice-President. Victimism without correct facts risks the eventual humiliation which is the fate of political liars.

Lori Lightfoot, the Black Mayor of Chicago, says that she will not grant interviews to white reporters. The Biden administration is giving grants only to Black farmers. Criminal Justice systems in the U.S. are automatically releasing without cash bail Black criminals due to the

victimism, to allow them to victimize more victims of crime.

Victimism is eventually self-defeating. Collective victimhood or victimism taken to the extreme takes away all "agency" from the marginalized group. If a group is victimized, they have no responsibility for where they are at and no agency to direct where they want to go.

It is a bad ideology.

Howard Rotberg is a retired lawyer and developer of affordable rental housing who has written four books and dozens of essays on ideologies, values and political culture. He is the founder of Canada's sole conservative values and pro-Israel publishing house Mantua Books.