
The Fall of California

Gregory Hood, *American Renaissance*,

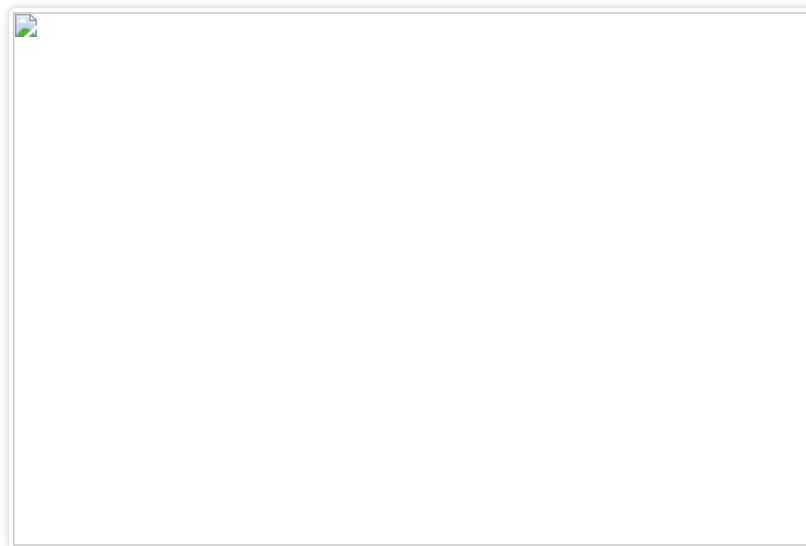
The “Golden State” goes brown.

California isn’t just a place, but a dream. In the American mythos, California represented the end of the journey, the land where the dispossessed and forgotten could start again, where “Okies” who fled the Depression searched for relief and veterans of the Second World War discovered a middle-class paradise. And what’s most incredible is that, for a time, that’s what it was.

Today, white Californians are fleeing, and the Golden State is becoming demographically, culturally, and economically a Third World country. The California dream can only be spoken of in the past tense. And the fall of California is a grim prophecy of how paradise can be lost, and how those who have everything can be short-sighted enough to give it all away.

It seems impossible to believe now, but California was, until recently, an ideal state for middle-class families. After the end of the Second World War, California meant “the good life” in the minds of Americans. “Thanks to wartime and Cold War defense spending, a flourishing consumer economy, and a seemingly ever-expanding tax base, the state was at the forefront of the single greatest rise in prosperity in American history,” [writes](#) Benjamin Schwartz, reviewing Kevin Starr’s *Americans and the California Dream*. High wages not only sustained a thriving middle class but meant the government could invest in public institutions all its residents could enjoy. Mr. Starr’s multivolume history defines the “California Dream” as “the highest possible life for the middle classes,” in a state where ordinary people enjoyed well-maintained public services, quality schools, their own homes, and ever-increasing wages.

It’s hard to imagine Los Angeles as a white city, let alone a middle-class city. Yet even such iconic examples of urban dystopia such as Compton once hosted California Dreamers. For a short time, the Bush family (including future presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush) [lived in Compton](#). In *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*, Josh Sides [describes](#) Compton as a city that “offered its predominantly blue-collar residents affordable homes in the heart of a thriving industrial center.” Of course, as you would expect a book about African-American life to note, segregation and restrictive housing covenants protected this middle-class paradise.



Los Angeles (Credit Image: © Image Source/Image Source/ZUMAPRESS.com)

That paradise is gone. “The [San Fernando] Valley was once America’s suburb, the nation’s most firmly rooted bastion of families holding jobs sufficient to pay for homes, cars, leisure and college tuition,” [noted](#) Beth Barrett in the *LA Weekly* in 2009. Yet now the Valley is, as she puts it, “the poster child for middle-class flight.” In 1970, more than 60 percent of residents could afford both an average priced house as well as the costs of a college education. By 2007, fewer than half could. Perhaps not coincidentally, more than 40 percent of Valley residents in 2007 were born outside the country.

What is true for the Valley is also true for the state more broadly. Fox News reports California’s [housing situation](#) is “broken.” Seventy-five percent of Southern Californians can’t afford a home, and 16 of the top 25 least affordable American communities are in California. A majority of state voters report they may have to relocate because of housing costs, with 25 percent saying they plan to leave the state. House prices in California are twice the national average. Today, few speak of the middle-class “California Dream.” Everyone has heard of the progressive politics of the nation’s “Left Coast,” but when cost-of-living is considered, California has the [highest poverty rate in the nation](#).

The *Los Angeles Times* recently profiled a number of former residents, including professional left-wing “community organizers,” who have [fled](#) California for more affordable housing in Las Vegas. As author Steve Lopez observed, these Golden State expatriates are not leaving to look for work or higher wages, but to find a place to live. [According to North American Moving Service’s annual report](#), California was one of America’s top five outbound states for the first time in 2017, with 40 percent inbound moves vs. 60 percent outbound moves. And those people who are still moving to California are no longer Americans; the state’s new residents [are increasingly foreigners](#).

The Bay Area has been especially hard hit. The number of people moving out is now at its highest level in more than a decade, [according to local press reports](#). Rent [increased](#) an average of 40 percent in just two years from 2015 to 2017 in Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose. According to the Bay Area Council, a public policy advocacy organization, [40 percent of the population wants to leave](#), and they cite cost of living, traffic, housing, and homelessness as the top four problems. There are already reports of violent confrontations between residents and groups of homeless. One resident circulated a letter in a homeless camp [saying](#), “We are sick of watching you leave needles in the park and stealing.” A recent investigation from NBC Bay Area found squalor and filth in downtown San Francisco which drew comparisons to [“some of the worst slums in the world.”](#)

This does not mean California is a poor state. California’s per capita income has actually increased in recent years and the state’s iconic tech companies are still [powering](#) economic growth. Yet much of the wealth is going only to top income earners. The median Californian family is barely making more money than it did in 1980, and the bottom 20 percent of earners [are doing worse](#). Because housing costs are so high, it’s far more difficult for the typical Californian to remain middle class.

The result is “white flight” on a statewide scale. Half a million white Californians left the state from 2000 to 2008, while the state’s population grew overall. Whites were [48 percent](#) of the population in 2000, but only 40 percent in 2008. Hispanics were 32 percent in 2000 but 37 percent in 2008. On July 1, 2014, Hispanics became [the largest racial group](#) in the state. They are projected to be a majority by 2060.

Facing a high cost of living, a majority-minority population, and crumbling cities, many whites are relocating to areas that are moral rural and white—the way California used to be. According to Vox, while only a minority of whites openly state they are looking for a white community (at least not to journalists and academics), research shows they are highly conscious of race when choosing where to live: They seek out places that are [majority white](#).

Not all white people have fled; the influx of tech workers to San Francisco has [radically changed that city](#), often to the frustration of liberal residents who, although they don’t frame it this way, are opposed to cultural transformation when whites bring it. They are said to [carry the plague](#) that is known as “gentrification.”

A particular type of white person is fleeing California. According to the *Mercury News*, “The largest group of outmigrants tends to be middle-aged people making between \$100,000 and \$200,000

annually . . . [those who] constitute the solid middle ranks critical to any healthy economy.” And it is those people—those who don’t want live in California’s squalid, expensive cities and who want to own their own homes—who have no future in the Golden State.

Urban theorist Constance Perin, quoted in Mr. Starr’s *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance*, believes that home ownership reinforces racial identity and conservative social mores. It was thus crucially important not just to California’s economic structure during its postwar golden years, but to its social structure.

Summarizing Miss Perin’s views, Mr. Starr writes:

Middle-class Americans preferred to live among their own kind of people: people, that is, who looked like they looked, earned what they earned, had been raised the same way they had been raised, and generally shared the same philosophy of life. Home ownership—especially on the mass scale practiced in the new California developments—ensured such a willful segregation. Families voluntarily came to these places to be with their own kind.

Now Californians are trying to recreate this in other states. [NPR noticed](#) that at least some out-migrants are deliberately seeking out conservative areas such as Idaho. Race is also a factor, as many are explicitly looking for white areas. As one frustrated and lonely Democrat from Coeur d’ Alene complained, “We’re very, very white up here . . . it’s very dull.” That kind of dullness is exactly what many former Californians yearn for.

In the interior of the state, where housing is somewhat more affordable, there is less outward migration. However, there is an attempt at political escape, as activists are trying to create the state of “[New California](#),” which would include everything except the southern coastline and the cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento.

Such a political escape is necessary because California is on the brink of becoming a one-party state. Independents are likely soon to [outnumber](#) Republicans. In the [upcoming gubernatorial election](#), the Republican candidate will not even survive the primary, since California has a jungle primary in which the top two candidates, regardless of party, are on the general election ballot. California Democrats are [competing](#) to be the most anti-Trump candidate and use opposition to the president as a springboard to national office. California has all but seceded from the Union when it comes to immigration policy, with its Attorney General vowing to [prosecute](#) employers that help federal law enforcement find illegal immigrants.

This is extraordinary, considering California’s earlier reputation as not just a conservative state, but practically the birthplace of the conservative movement. Orange County was a [stronghold](#) of the John Birch Society. California launched the careers of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. But no Republican presidential candidate has won the state since George H.W. Bush in 1988, and it is doubtful any Republican ever will again.

Yet it’s too simplistic to say white voters have been overwhelmed by non-white immigrants. Hillary Clinton won the white vote in California. What happened is that 800,000 working-class Californians left for other states between 2005 and 2015. As *The American Interest* [notes](#), while Hispanic workers who fled were replaced by new Hispanic immigrants, white workers who fled were not. The whites who remain are either the urban upper class or those who are trying to be and are predisposed to cultural liberalism. What middle-class jobs remain are mainly in the public sector, the unionized contingent of which is solidly Democratic and [far oversized by national standards](#). California’s burgeoning minorities are of course automatically hostile to Republicans.

As Troy Senik [put it](#) in *National Review* in 2014, “California is a state that owes its regnant liberalism to a political alliance between the super-rich and the super-poor.” And as it is the super-rich who actually wield the political power, California is governed by what some have called “gentry liberals,” described by Mr. Senik as “a left-wing governing caste whose public-policy predilections owe more to considerations of taste than of economic necessity.” A demand for more government unites these constituencies, but

they share few institutions such as schools or community groups. The only time the different elements of the Democratic coalition actually meet is at a Democratic convention, not in normal social interactions.

The real question is what changed California from a conservative middle-class paradise into an unruly conglomeration of wealthy liberals ruling over teeming, poverty-stricken non-white masses. In an article outlining the problems facing the “California Dream,” the *Los Angeles Daily News* admits the state has the “highest rates for poverty and income inequality . . . [and] government resources are stretched thin.” But, the article concludes, “The news isn’t all bad . . . [we’re] much more diverse!”

It’s not just that mass immigration is straining local infrastructure, increasing demand on housing, and bringing crime, disease, and cultural conflict. It’s that diversity caused much of this collapse to begin with. The “California Dream” began to break down as demographics changed. Mass immigration, and the wholesale transformation of entire cities from all white to all-Hispanic within only a few decades is only the most obvious example.

Public policy also accelerated the decline. As in in the rest of the country, the push to desegregate public schools and other institutions had disastrous consequences, even before California’s demographics were transformed by immigration. In 1978, Los Angeles began a busing program to enforce desegregation, sometimes forcing children to attend schools more than an hour from where they lived. Not surprisingly, it practically destroyed the school system, as white parents pulled their children out. The public-school system has never recovered.

Looking for an explanation of California’s decline, progressives point to what they claim is the destructive impact of 1978’s Proposition 13, which imposed stringent limits on property taxes. They claim this prevented necessary investments in public infrastructure, but even this was partially driven by diversity. As Peter Schrag, author of *Paradise Lost: California’s Experience, America’s Future* points out, the revolt against government spending “occurred precisely during the period when the state was undergoing those demographic changes: from a society that thought of itself (and in many ways was) overwhelmingly white and middle class to one in which whites will soon be just another minority and where Hispanics, Asians, and blacks already constitute a sizeable majority in school enrollment and in the use of many other public services.”

This shouldn’t be surprising. Research into the “progressive’s dilemma” shows that diversity tends to undermine support for public welfare programs and investment, since taxpayers are less likely to support payments to people who are far different from themselves. With the end of “restrictive covenants” in 1948 and the implementation of the Fair Housing Law in 1968, the tactics that preserved white neighborhoods such as the Compton of the Bush era were undermined. California’s white taxpayers stopped having as great a stake in the parks, neighborhoods, and schools that were once the pride of the state. Political action became focused on how to protect property and wealth from non-white dependents and how best to escape from crumbling, desegregated public institutions.

Yet the deathblow to white, middle-class California was the reversal of Proposition 187, which would have barred illegals from public schools and welfare and would have allowed police to question arrested suspects about their immigration status. While it wouldn’t have restored the golden age, Proposition 187, if implemented, could have prevented California from becoming an outright Hispanic state. The mainstream media now tell the story of Proposition 187 as a cautionary tale, as the reason non-whites abandoned the GOP. Yet this measure, which saved the political career of Governor Pete Wilson, won majority support not just from white Californians but from Asian and black Californians.

Unfortunately, after a lawsuit from the American Civil Liberties Union and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, a judge threw out Proposition 187. Governor Wilson was forced out of office by term limits, and his successor, Governor Gray Davis, refused to appeal. Governor Davis’s political career ended in a humiliating recall.

There is some hope that “New California” could retain something of the old California, and the state is so unwieldy and populous that breaking it up would probably be best for all of its regions and peoples. But that is only an attempt to salvage what is left. The impending departure of Peter Thiel from Silicon

Valley suggests some of California's elite may know the situation is unsustainable and are making escape plans.

The American middle-class paradise is now a society on the Latin American model, with elites enjoying cheap labor, gated communities, and a privileged existence, lording it over the 21st century's equivalent of landless peasants. The fact that much of this later group is non-white, broke the law to enter this country, and have deep-seated grievances against the European-American population suggests there is almost no possibility of rebuilding the spirit of civic solidarity needed for California to solve its social problems.

That spirit was a creation of the white population that conquered, settled, and built the state but is being driven out by desegregation and mass immigration. The lesson of California is that racial solidarity is essential to building a prosperous society that offers real benefits to ordinary workers and middle-class families. Absent white racial identity, community dies, institutions break down, infrastructure crumbles, it becomes too expensive to form families, and elites exploit cheap labor while isolating themselves from its consequences. When California was a white state it was truly the Golden State for middle-class America, the exemplar of our country's bright future. Now, the state is a warning of a what a Third World America will look like—and serves as a challenge to white advocates to keep the rest of our country from sharing California's fate.