

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Hallowed Secularism

The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian
Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly
Excellence and Professor of Law

11-8-2015

November 8, 2015: What is Wrong with Whites?

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism>



Part of the [Constitutional Law Commons](#), and the [Law and Philosophy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2015). November 8, 2015: What is Wrong with Whites?. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/975>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence and Professor of Law at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hallowed Secularism by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact beharyr@duq.edu.

Title: What is Wrong with Whites?

Date: 2015-11-08T06:24:00.004-05:00

11/8/2015—Here is a blog posting from Paul Krugman on a study showing rising death rates among non-Hispanic Whites in the U.S. ***** This new paper by Angus Deaton and Anne Case on mortality among middle-aged whites has been getting a lot of attention, and rightly so. As a number of people have pointed out, the closest parallel to America's rising death rates — driven by poisonings, suicide, and chronic liver diseases — is the collapse in Russian life expectancy after the fall of Communism. (No, we're not doing as badly as that, but still.) What the data look like is a society gripped by despair, with a surge of unhealthy behaviors and an epidemic of drugs, very much including alcohol. This picture goes along with declining labor force participation and other indicators of social unraveling. Something terrible is happening to white American society. And it's a uniquely American phenomenon; you don't see anything like it in Europe, which means that it's not about a demoralizing welfare state or any of the other myths so popular in our political discourse. There's a lot to be said, or at any rate suggested, about the politics of this disaster. But I'll come back to that some other time. For now, the thing to understand, to say it again, is that something terrible is happening to our country — and it's not about Those People, it's about the white majority. ***** I'm tempted to attribute this to the death of religion and the failure of secularism to come up with a form of meaning that can contribute to flourishing human life. And there is some support in this idea, since the other groups, most particularly Hispanics and African-Americans, whose death rates are not going up, are more religious than is the White majority. But, if this is the case, why would it not infect Europe, where the death of religion is much more pronounced? This suggests that the real problem is the death of the American dream. Middle age Whites are the ones who never got ahead as the system was, and finally seemed to them to be, rigged against them: stagnant wages in the presence of massive wealth at the top. But, again, why would Europe be exempt? Economic conditions there are much worse than in the U.S. But social solidarity is not as low. That is true in two senses. First, materially, the social welfare safety net still works in Europe. For example, even if my life is a dead end, my children get a good education and have more upward mobility than in America. So, I would not have to feel like I failed my kids. Second, psychologically and ideologically, Americans believe in individualism. Conservatives and liberals. (On the left, it's called choice and it's the reason that fathers have no say whatever in the abortion decision, not even the right to know about it). So, in America, you are on your own. Stand on your own two feet. Or, in this case, lie down in your own grave.