

# [***VICTOR DAVIS HANSON: The Hysterical Style In American Politics***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B4M-NM51-JBFB-H01J-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

[*Link to Image*](https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Antifa-scaled-e1636393825611.jpg)

The post-Joe McCarthy era and the candidacy of Barry Goldwater once prompted liberal political scientist Richard Hofstadter to chronicle a supposedly long-standing right-wing “paranoid style” of conspiracy-fed extremism.

But far more common, especially in the 21st century, has been a left-wing “hysterical style” of inventing scandals and manipulating perceived tensions for political advantage.

Or, in the immortal words of former President Barack Obama's chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, “Never let a serious crisis go to waste.”

The 2008 economic emergency crested on Sept. 7, with the near collapse of the home mortgage industry.

Obama took office on January 20, 2009, more than four months after the meltdown. In that interim, the officials had finally restored financial confidence and plotted a course of economic recovery.

No matter. The Obama administration never stopped hyping the financial meltdown as if it had just occurred. That way, it rammed through Obamacare, massive deficit spending, and the vast expansion of the federal government. All that stymied economic growth and recovery for years.

In 2016, then-President Donald Trump was declared Hitler-like and an existential threat to democracy.

Amid this derangement syndrome, any means necessary to stop him were justified: the Russian collusion hoax, impeachment over a phone call, or the Hunter laptop disinformation farce.

Eventually, the left sought to normalize the once unthinkable: removing the leading presidential candidate from state ballots and indicting him in state and local courts.

Nothing was off limits - not forging a federal court document, calling for a military coup, rioting on Inauguration Day, or radically changing the way Americans voted in presidential elections.

In Oct. 2017, allegations surfaced about serial sexual predation by liberal cinema icon Harvey Weinstein.

The #MeToo furor immediately followed.

At first, accusers properly outed dozens of mostly liberal celebrities, actors, authors, and CEOs for their prior and mostly covered-up sexual harassment and often assault.

But soon, the once legitimate movement had morphed into general hysteria. Thousands of men (and women) were persecuted for alleged offenses, often sexual banter or rude repartee, committed decades prior.

#MeToo jumped the shark with the left-wing effort to take down conservative Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. Would-be accusers surfaced from his high school days, 35 years earlier, but without any supporting evidence or witnesses for their wild, lurid charges.k

#MeToo hysteria ended when too many liberal grandees were endangered. Most dramatically, former Joe Biden senatorial aide Tara Reade came forward during the 2020 campaign cycle with charges that front-runner Biden had once sexually assaulted her - and was trashed by the liberal media.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States during the winter of 2020 prompted an even greater hysteria.

Without scientific evidence, federal health czars Anthony Fauci and Francis Collins were able to convince the Trump administration to shut down the economy in the country's first national quarantine.

Suddenly, it became a thought crime to question the wisdom of six-foot social distancing, of mandatory mask wearing, of the Wuhan virology lab's origin of the COVID virus, or of off-label use of prescription drugs.

Left-wing politicians and celebrities, from Hillary Clinton and Gavin Newsom to Jane Fonda, all blurted out the political advantages that the lockdowns offered- from recalibrating capitalism and health care to ensuring the 2020 defeat of Trump.

The COVID hysteria magically ended when Biden won the 2020 election. Suddenly, the explanations about the bat or pangolin origins of the virus faded. The damage from the quarantines could no longer be repressed. And herd immunity gradually mitigated the epidemic.

The lockdown caused untold economic chaos, suicides, and health crises.

One result was the 120 days of looting, arson, death, destruction, and violence spawned by Antifa and Black Lives Matter in the aftermath of the tragic death of George Floyd while in police custody in May 2020.

Suddenly, a hysterical lie took hold: American police were waging war against Black males.

The details around Floyd's sudden death - he was in the act of committing a felony, resisting arrest, suffering from coronary artery disease and the after-effects of COVID, and high on dangerous drugs - were off limits.

The riot toll reached $2 billion in property damage, over 35 deaths, and 1,500 injured law enforcement officers. A federal courthouse, a police precinct, and a historic church were torched.

Police forces were defunded. Emboldened left-wing prosecutors nullified existing laws.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion commissars spread throughout American higher education as meritocracy came under assault.

Racial essentialism triumphed. Racially segregated dorms, campus spaces, and graduations were normalized.

Everything from destroying the southern border to dropping SAT requirements for college admission followed.

Sometimes real, sometimes hyped crises lead to these contrived left-wing hysterias - like the January 6 violent “armed insurrection” or the “fascist” “ultra-MAGA” threat.

Otherwise, the progressive movement cannot enact its unpopular agendas. So it must scare the people silly and gin up chaos to destroy its perceived enemies - any crisis it can.

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*The views and opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the Daily Caller.*

**Graphic**

SALT LAKE CITY, UT - SEPTEMBER 27: ANTIFA protesters demonstrate on the University of Utah campus against an event where right wing writer and commentator Ben Shapiro is speaking on September 27, 2017 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Campus authorities have increased security ahead of the appearance by Shapiro, a former editor-at-large for Breitbart News. (Photo by George Frey/Getty Images)

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