

# How will we cope when the last middle-class man slumps to the ground?

To hear the likes of Niall Ferguson, he is part of an endangered species. A strange new phenomenon seems to have struck him and his media chums: victim-envy



Niall Ferguson, a white rhino. Composite: Christian Sinibaldi/Guardian; AFP

The last male northern white rhino died last month<sup>1</sup>, and a memorial was held. David Attenborough spoke about the end of this subspecies. Prince William is prone, like his father, to making pro-rhino speeches. Two female northern white rhinos survive and, with sophisticated IVF methods, it's possible more will be produced<sup>2</sup>. One can but hope.

I imagine it will be like this when the last middle-class man slumps to the ground. Why did we not do more to save this endangered species, we will ask ourselves? Royalty will be shipped in. We thought they would lumber on. We didn't realise the environment we were forcing them to live in was becoming impossible. How could these creatures even mate after #MeToo? How could they forage for food when women went to work all the time? How could they survive when women demanded to be paid equally, and to not be attacked?

The brave ones who feel totally muzzled somehow do manage to speak out occasionally. It is difficult for them, the way they are silenced, even though they have newspaper columns, academic posts, TV and radio programmes. How are they to get a word in? They manage, just about.

Up steps the latest victim, poor Niall Ferguson<sup>3</sup>, author, history professor and lover of empire, who wrote in the *Sunday Times* that he had to endure a "disproportionately vitriolic response" for organising a conference that featured only white male historians. How he has suffered, I can only imagine.

Jordan Peterson, another minor academic, became major<sup>4</sup> simply by outlining how wrong we are to talk of the various ways in which western culture has been deemed oppressive to women. Excuse me, but didn't Camille Paglia do that 20 years ago?

To such men, any notion of inclusiveness, or of the dread "diversity", becomes a threat. The very presence of women, except as tokens, is difficult and somehow invasive for such men. Never mind

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/20/last-male-white-rhino-is-put-down>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/20/sudan-northern-white-rhino-dead-species-endangered-species-conservationists>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/niall-ferguson>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/mar/16/jordan-b-peterson-self-help-guru-we-love-to-hate>

the debate over trans women in women-only spaces, the issue here is really one of any women at all in any space.

The brand of truth-telling these battle-scarred men are revered for situates men as both always naturally in control but as now having to fight for their position. For young men who feel belittled, these guys are heroes. A dodgy reading of history combined with some dubious evolutionary biology is used to justify a strange new phenomenon: victim-envy. Victimhood is now the prize and they will beat off the opposition to claim it.

The double bluff is extraordinary. Identity politics<sup>5</sup> is pooh poohed as an Olympics of oppression, yet the suffering of the white man is now the biggest of all. This is the group that shouts loudest about being unable to voice its feelings. The identity politics is certainly succeeding. Steve Bannon understood it well enough to utilise it to help Donald Trump win. Is it any wonder Bannon is also concerned with the power of the #metoo movement?

The call to victimhood of this “endangered” species is heard everywhere, from Nigel Farage to John Humphrys to Jeremy Clarkson to Piers Morgan. These men who dare to speak out are everywhere in public life, at the top of every organisation, having meetings about how to employ more women. They are forced into this by Europe, modernity or some godawful HR directive. They like to say they care about FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) or the massacre of the Rohingya, but see complaints about equal access or equal pay as white noise.

Their lot is pitiful. How can they flirt, employ the best man for the job or even have a laugh? They are truly victimised and so they call out to each other, these great white males, as if they were on their last legs. Who will help them survive and reproduce? Who will listen to this most downtrodden of all identities?

The entire establishment. For they are it.

The political nous (spirit) of remainers remains practically zilch

If I wanted to design a political campaign to actively turn off the average punter, or at least make them feel indifferent, who would I cast? Tony Blair, obviously. He can't go anywhere without being called a war criminal. Then there's his henchman Alastair Campbell. I might throw in AC Grayling for a bit of arrogance and Nick Clegg for a bit of haplessness. And a lord or two. Adonis maybe. And yet somehow this supergroup are the figureheads for the anti-Brexit lobby. Is it any wonder it's happening?

I don't doubt the sincerity of their views, but the tone is completely wrong – the refusal to understand the cultural reasons for the leave vote, the intoning of the economic arguments over and over again, the valorising of an EU that seems happy to see the Catalan president in prison or massive youth unemployment in Italy. The leaders of both our major parties are signed up to Brexit. The Glastonbury crowds who chant “Oh, Jeremy Corbyn” seem neither to know nor care about that part of his agenda.

This is a deeply inconvenient truth, but the fact is, if “the youth” have not woken up to that yet, it seems unlikely they will soon. And if they organise, then surely their leaders will not all be guys in their 50s?

While every day, remainers laugh, mock and tell us what fools the Brexiters are – and, yes, some are – the political nous of remainers remains practically zilch. Green party co-leader Caroline Lucas always makes good sense to me, but the rest too often appear to be yesterday's men fighting

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/identity-politics>

yesterday's battles while attempting to stand on a moral high ground that does not exist for them. That ground was exploded in Iraq. They are tied to the past, not the future.

In honour of Anna Campbell, and her father

□ The G2 interview with Dirk Campbell<sup>6</sup> – the father of Anna Campbell, who died fighting with the Kurdish forces in Syria – was immensely moving. Anna was clearly a massively engaged, caring and political young woman who chose what she wanted to do. As a parent of course I would be horrified if any of my daughters put themselves in such danger. But I also know that sometimes you must let go. Her father knew she was going to a war zone, but now says he did not know enough about it. He is proud of her: “I don't think I had any right to stop her. She was a 26-year-old woman. I had to trust her.” For that I respect him and her memory enormously.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/01/anna-campbell-father-no-right-to-stop-her-fighting-syria-kurds>