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## Tribal America

By [Mark Steyn](#)

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To an immigrant such as myself (not the undocumented kind, but documented up to the hilt, alas), one of the most striking features of election-night analysis was the lightly worn racial obsession. On Fox News, Democrat Kirsten Powers argued that Republicans needed to deal with the reality that America is becoming what she called a “brown country.” Her fellow Democrat Bob Beckel observed on several occasions that if the share of the “white vote” was held down below 73 percent Romney would lose. In the end, it was 72 percent and he did. Beckel’s assertion — that if you knew the ethnic composition of the electorate you also knew the result — turned out to be correct.

This is what less enlightened societies call tribalism: For example, in the 1980 election leading to Zimbabwe’s independence, Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU-PF got the votes of the Ndebele people while Robert Mugabe’s ZANU-PF secured those of the Shona — and, as there were more Shona than Ndebele, Mugabe won. That same year America held an election, and Ronald Reagan won a landslide victory. Nobody talked about tribal-vote shares back then, but had the percentage of what Beckel calls the “white vote” been the same in 2012 as it was in 1980 (88 percent), Mitt Romney would have won in an even bigger landslide than Reagan. The “white vote” will be even lower in 2016, and so, on the Beckel model, Republicans are set to lose all over again.

Hence the urge to get on the right side of America’s fastest-growing demographic. Only 27 percent of Hispanics voted for Romney. But all that could change if the GOP were to sign on to support some means of legalizing the presence of the 12–20 million fine upstanding members of the Undocumented-American community who are allegedly “social conservatives” and thus natural Republican voters. Once we pass amnesty, argues Grover Norquist’s Americans for Tax Reform, “future immigrants will be more open to the Republican Party because, unlike many immigrants who are already here, they won’t have been harmed or insulted by Republican politicians.”

So, if I follow correctly, instead of getting 27 percent of the 10 percent Hispanic vote, Republicans will get, oh, 38 percent of the 25 percent Hispanic vote, and sweep to victory.

Everyone talks about this demographic transformation as if it’s a natural phenomenon, like Hurricane Sandy. Indeed, I notice that many of those exulting in the inevitable eclipse of “white America” are the same people who assure me that demographic arguments about the Islamization of Europe are completely preposterous. But in neither the United States nor Europe is it a natural phenomenon. Rather, it’s the fruit of conscious government policy.

According to the Census, in 1970 the “Non-Hispanic White” population of California was 78 percent. By the 2010 census, it was 40 percent. Over the same period, the 10 percent Hispanic population quadrupled and caught up with whites.

That doesn’t sound terribly “natural” does it? If one were informed that, say, the population of Nigeria had gone from 80 percent black in 1970 to 40 percent black today, one would suspect something rather odd and unnatural had been going on. Twenty years ago, Rwanda was about 14 percent Tutsi. Now it’s just under 10 percent. So it takes a bunch of Hutu butchers getting out their machetes and engaging in seven-figure genocide to lower the Tutsi population by a third. But, when the white population of California falls by half, that’s “natural,” just the way it is, one of those things, could happen to anyone.

Every four years, the Republican party pines for another Reagan. But Ronald Reagan, governor of California for eight years, couldn’t get elected in today’s not-so-Golden State. Jerry Brown, Governor Moonbeam back in the Seventies, now presides

as Governor Twilight, lead vampire of a malign alliance of unionized bureaucrats and a swollen dependency class that maintains them in office at the expense of a remorselessly shrinking productive class. As the nation's demographic profile trends ever more Californian, perhaps Norquist's predictions of naturally conservative Hispanics pining for a new Reagan will come to fruition. Or perhaps Bob Beckel's more crudely determinative analysis will prove correct — that, in a multicultural society, jostling identity groups will stick with the party of ethnocultural spoils.

Once upon a time, the Democrats thought differently. It was their first progressive president, Woodrow Wilson, who imposed the concept of “self-determination” on post-Great War Europe, insisting that the multicultural empires of the Habsburgs and Romanovs be replaced by a patchwork of ethnic statelets from the Balkans to the Baltics. He would be surprised to find his own party presiding over a Habsburgian America of bilingual Balkanization as a matter of electoral strategy.

The short history of the Western Hemisphere is as follows: North America was colonized by Anglo-Celts, Central and South America by “Hispanics.” Up north, two centuries of constitutional evolution and economic growth; down south, coups, corruption, generalissimos, and presidents-for-life. None of us can know the future. It may be that Charles Krauthammer is correct that Hispanics are natural Republicans merely pining for amnesty, a Hallmark Cinco de Mayo card, and a mariachi band at the inaugural ball. Or it may be that, in defiance of Dr. Krauthammer, Grover Norquist, and Little Mary Sunshine, demographics is destiny and, absent assimilationist incentives this country no longer imposes, a Latin American population will wind up living in a Latin American society. Don't take it from a right-wing bigot like me, take it from the *New York Times*. In 2009, Jason DeParle filed a story about suburban Maryland, in which he helpfully explained the municipality of Langley Park to *Times* readers:

Now nearly two-thirds Latino and foreign-born, it has the aesthetics of suburban sprawl and the aura of Central America. Laundromats double as money-transfer stores. Jobless men drink and sleep in the sun. There is no city government, few community leaders, and little community.

Golly. You'd almost get the impression that Mr. DeParle thinks that laundromats doubling as money-transfer stores, jobless men drinking and sleeping in the sun, and dysfunctional government are somehow characteristic of Central America. That sounds awfully judgmental for a *Times* man, no?

Republicans think they're importing hardworking immigrants who want a shot at the American Dream; the Democrats think they're importing clients for Big Government. The Left is right: Just under 60 percent of immigrants receive some form of welfare. I see the recent Republican proposals for some form of amnesty contain all sorts of supposed safeguards against gaming the system, including a \$525 application fee for each stage of the legalization process. On my own recent visit to a U.S. Immigration office, I was interested to be told that, as a matter of policy, the Obama administration is now rubberstamping all “fee waiver” requests for “exceptional hardship” filed by members of approved identity groups. And so it will go for all those GOP safeguards. While Canada and Australia compete for high-skilled immigrants, America fast-tracks an unskilled welfare class of such economic benefit to their new homeland they can't even afford a couple of hundred bucks for the necessary paperwork.

It's hardly their fault. If you were told you could walk into a First World nation and access free education, free health care, free services in your own language, and have someone else pay your entrance fee, why wouldn't you? So, yes, Republicans should “moderate” their tone toward immigrants, and de-moderate their attitude to the Dems who suckered the GOP all too predictably. Decades of faintheartedness toward some of the most destabilizing features of any society, including bilingualism (take it from a semi-Belgian Canadian), have brought the party to its date with destiny. Or as Peggy Lee sang long ago in a lost land, “*Mañana* is soon enough for me.”

— *Mark Steyn, a NATIONAL REVIEW columnist, is the author of After America: Get Ready for Armageddon. © 2012 Mark Steyn*

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