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Preemptive Martyrdom

[Trump Says Civil Rights Led to White People Being 'Very Badly Treated' - The New York Times](#)

Reading this article today sent my brain buzzing, so I'd like to share some of my thoughts with our community here.

For far too many decades of my life, I've been part of faith communities that eagerly embraced seeing themselves as an oppressed peoples, even when all evidence was to the contrary. If no immediate anecdotes of persecution happening on U.S. soil were available, the leaders quickly turned to examples of Christians in other countries being targeted and even killed for their faith.

This culture can be prevalent in a whole host of different communities, but it is certainly not my place to comment on them. I can, having spent my entire life in White evangelical and fundamentalist christian spaces, address the culture we have curated (or allowed to fester) within these congregations.

When every Sunday, worship songs are chosen that emotionally remind us that God is on **our** side; when we are lightning quick to elevate any testimony shared by a teenager who faced a tiny bit of pushback on their proud proclamation of their faith, as an example of someone being persecuted; when sermons regularly remind congregants that they will face hatred from something as abstract as "The World;" these practices build up over time and reinforce a preemptive attitude of martyrdom. It becomes deeply engrained in the minds and hearts of those who live in this type of practice of faith.

I would posit that what we are seeing today is the result of generations of White, especially males, raised in this mindset. It is paired with the psychic burden of a generation raised in the shadow of 9/11 and the fear/victimhood of that event, boosted by being required to share decision making and (gasp) leadership with females and people of other races or religions, and ultimately fully armed by an out-of-control Executive branch, willing to pay outrageous salaries and put lethal weapons in their hands to "fix" the society's injustices to them.

Here's the thing: None of this can be effective if we, as a society, learn to cultivate a resistance to the scapegoat that those in power would offer us. The more consistently we raise our children and encourage our communities to see themselves in collaboration with others, the harder it is to pit us against them. I would humbly submit that we need a more resilient attitude to personal setbacks in life, a willingness to adapt as culture shifts, and a genuine belief that even strangers are our "brothers" in this life, for Jesus himself taught us that we are their keepers.