Twitter Thread by Eddie Du

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Income by race converged at the greatest rate between 1940 and 1970.

However, as of 2018, Black/white income disparities were almost exactly the same as they were in 1968, 50 years

Although clear majorities supported the 1964 Civil Rights Act, a national poll conducted shortly after its passage showed that 68% of Americans wanted moderation in its enforcement.

In fact, many felt that LBJ was moving too fast in implementing integration.

On the heels of Reconstruction came a period that Southerners called “redemption,” a violent project to restore white hegemony.

Redemption coincided with the vast upheaval of industrialization and urbanization, when the United States more broadly plunged into the Gilded Age.

But as the century turned and the Gilded Age gave way to the Progressive Era, a diverse group of reformers grabbed the reins of history and set a course toward greater economic equality, political bipartisanship, social cohesion and cultural communitarianism.

Some six decades later all of those upward trends reversed, setting the United States on a downward course that has brought us to the multifaceted national crisis in which we find ourselves today, which bears a remarkable resemblance to the Gilded Age.

The moment America took its foot off the gas in rectifying racial inequalities largely coincides with the moment America’s “we” decades gave way to the era of “I.”

A central feature of America’s “I” decades has been a shift away from shared responsibilities toward individual rights and a culture of narcissism.

Whatever sense of belonging Americans feel today is largely to factional (and often racially defined) in-groups locked in fierce competition with one another for cultural control and perceived scarce resources.

Perhaps America’s larger turn toward “I” was simply a response to the challenge of sustaining a more diverse, multiracial “we” in an environment of deep, embedded and unresolved racism.

But it is also possible that a broader societal turn away from shared responsibilities to one another eroded the fragile national consensus around race as all Americans began to prioritize their own interests above the common good.

By the late 1960s, though the work of widening was not nearly complete, America had come closer to an inclusive “we” than ever before.

But just as that inclusion began to bear tangible fruit for Black Americans, much of that fruit began to die on the vine.