



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on May 30, 2020

The New York Times' Pulitzer Prize Winners: Hardly a Proud Record

Joseph Pulitzer was a Hungarian-born American newspaperman who began a career in the newspaper world in St. Louis after serving in the Union army in the late months of the Civil War. He also won election to the Missouri state legislature, where he helped organize a splinter political party that nominated hard-leftist Horace Greeley for president in 1872. When that venture failed, he joined the Democratic Party. He also moved to New York, where he purchased one newspaper and launched another. A competitor of William Randolph Hearst, the two dwelled in sensationalism and their publications earned the epithet "Yellow Journalism." Pulitzer also managed to spend his energy and resources on behalf of Democratic Party candidates and causes until passing away in 1911.



The Pulitzer name became more well-known when his will financed the founding of a journalism school at Columbia University in 1912 and the creation of the annual Pulitzer Prizes in 1917. Awards ever since have been given to writers of several categories of journalism and, in more recent times, to writers of fiction, history, biography, poetry, and other fields. Over the years, many of the Pulitzer award winners have been individuals better known for their liberal and leftist output than for their skill as journalists and authors.

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One example of an award that should never have been given was the conferring of a Pulitzer Prize for journalism on *New York Times* writer Walter Duranty after the series of 13 articles he wrote in the 1930s insisting that everything was fine in the Soviet Union. He insisted there was no Stalin-led forced famine in Ukraine, that the Soviet Union's masters were treating people in neighboring nations very well, and that life in the USSR was delightful. The truth was dramatically opposite: Several million people died from the famine created by the Stalin-regime in neighboring Ukraine, and the Russian people had already learned what a gulag was. Over subsequent years, attempts by several individuals to have the *Times* renounce the award to Duranty have been totally fruitless.

Last August, the *New York Times* launched the "1619 Project." It had Pulitzer canonization potential all over it. A lengthy essay announcing the project filled several pages in the the newspaper that daily claims to provide "All the News That's Fit to Print." Author Nikole Hannah-Jones, a veteran reporter specializing in schooling of blacks, treatment of blacks by police, and federal failures in gaining fair housing for blacks, wants America's founding to be shifted from 1776 and the War for Independence from Great Britain to 1619, the year of the arrival in the American colonies of its first shipment of slaves



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from Africa. Ms. Hannah-Jones insists that slavery was the “one primary reason the colonists fought the American revolution.” And for her 1619 Project she won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary earlier this month.

A graduate of Notre Dame University, where she majored in African-American studies, Hannah-Jones went on to study journalism and mass communication at the University of North Carolina. She insists: “Our Democracy’s founding ideals were false when they were written.” She evidently never learned that America has from its outset been [a republic, not a democracy](#).

Her research then leads her to claim that our nation “was built on racial caste” and should be redesigned from the bottom up. She adds that “our nation’s schools aren’t broken, they’re operating as designed.” Does that claim include Notre Dame and UNC?

A journalist who dissents from the obvious racism expressed by the creator of the 1619 Project, Jarrett Stepman, happily reported that the *Times* has reluctantly issued what it termed “a clarification” pointing out that retaining slavery was not the “one primary reason why the colonists” went to war against the British. Stepman was happy to note that even the World Socialist Website rightly labelled the 1619 Project “a politically motivated falsification of history.”

No one was better able to discuss the good fortune of blacks who live in America, even 60 years ago, than ex-communist Leonard Patterson, a black American. He contritely testified before a U.S. Senate Committee in 1960 about his years as a leading communist in America, even his two years of training the Soviet Union. He told the senators:

With all the shortcomings we have in the United States, if you want to put it on a racial basis, or a Negro basis, we American Negroes are better off, not only than minorities in Russia, but the so-called Great Russians themselves. I wouldn’t say there wasn’t room for improvement, but if you take it as a whole, we have the highest standard of living, we are better educated, and we have more wealth distributed among us. And I defy anyone to deny it.

Patterson’s word correctly summarized the condition of black Americans well before there was a civil rights movement. The prize Nikole Hannah-Jones deserves should come from those who want to tear America down, and who want constantly to destroy the good will and harmony that most black Americans enjoy with their white and black neighbors and co-workers. That she should earn a prize from the left-leaning Pulitzer Board isn’t surprising. We hope she awakens to what Leonard Patterson learned from his experience six decades ago. America isn’t heaven on Earth. But it’s far and away the best place for blacks and whites to live. And besmirching it with the wild claims of the 1619 Project won’t make things better.

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John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#).



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