



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on June 7, 2021

Published in the June 21, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 12

Rewriting History to Remake America

In his classic dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell wrote, “Those who control the past, control the future. Those who control the present, control the past.” Mass-murdering dictator Mao Tse-tung of Communist China understood this well, which is why he worked relentlessly to erase Chinese history and replace it with a fraudulent version taught to children in indoctrination centers masquerading as schools.



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While America has not reached the point at which a totalitarian, oligarchical government can simply send all contrary views down a “memory hole,” as in Orwell’s book, or rewrite history out of whole cloth, as Mao did, the United States is indeed witnessing an effort to alter Americans’ understanding of the past.

This indoctrination begins in America’s public-school classrooms in kindergarten and continues through graduate school, and poses an existential threat to the nation and its freedoms.

The purpose is clear, whether it is the late Howard Zinn’s radical *A People’s History of the United States*, the 1619 Project promoted by the *New York Times*, or even most textbooks used in American schools and colleges. These projects have in common a version of American history in which the Founders are fatally flawed, and their “accomplishments,” such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, were designed to oppress groups such as the poor and minorities. Such teaching leaves America’s public-school children susceptible to alternative forms of government, and dangerously Marxist forms of government in particular.

If this seems harsh, it should be noted that Howard Zinn was an instructor for the American Communist Party. It is not surprising that Zinn could write a book that distorts the true history of America. Yet, Zinn’s book is taught in many public schools across the country as true history.

Reading Zinn, the 1619 Project, or even most American history textbooks produced today, a student could get the impression that the United States is one of the most corrupt and evil places imaginable. Yet, millions of people around the world have come, and continue to come, to this country seeking a better life. In contrast, relatively few sneak into the communist hells of Cuba, North Korea, China, and Zimbabwe.

If students are subjected to a steady diet of leftist American history, they are likely to conclude that their country was rotten from the beginning, and they will be open to abandoning our present constitutional republic for some form of socialistic government. That is the goal, of course.

True Lessons From American History

Picture how different America would be if history was told as it was in the 1945 textbook *History of Our Country for Higher Grades* by Reuben P. Halleck. In his discussion of events in Plymouth Colony,



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Halleck wrote a section entitled “Experiment in Communism.” Halleck noted that the Pilgrims “were often in danger of starving because they were trying an experiment in communism, somewhat similar to the one which had failed at Jamestown.”

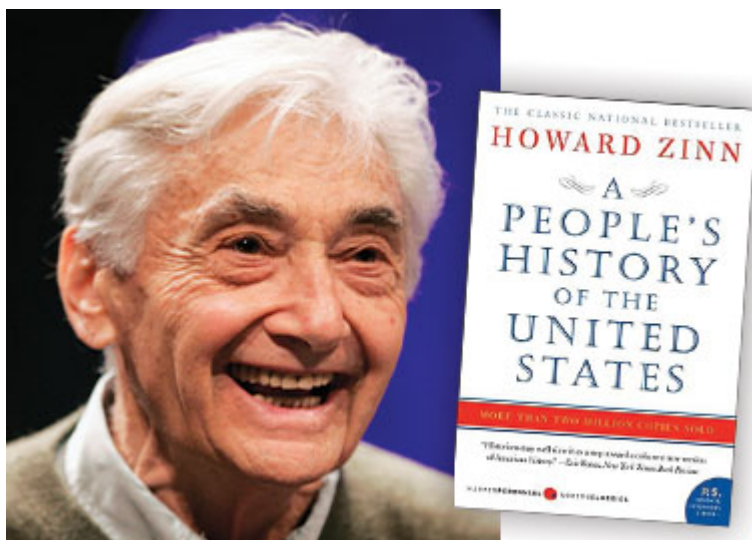
He explained:

The Pilgrims cultivated the land in common and put the crop into one storehouse for all. The lazy had as much corn as the hard workers. The colony would have starved if it had continued to till the ground for the common store, so Governor [William] Bradford permitted each family to receive the full returns from its allotted piece of ground. After this change (1623), many who had complained that they were sick went to the fields to plant corn. The danger from starving passed when each family had all the food that its members produced.

Halleck cited Bradford’s *History of Plymouth Plantation* about this “communistic experiment,” suggesting it would be “valuable for twentieth-century lawmakers.” He wrote that Bradford saw the error of the experiment, even among “godly and sober men.” Bradford, Halleck added, wrote that “‘the taking away of property and bringing community into a commonwealth’ had a fair trial amongst those godly and sober men, and the result ‘would have been worse if they had been men of another condition.’”

Halleck concluded, “This experience of the Pilgrims shows that our early history is not dead matter, but that a knowledge of it may help solve present problems.”

When this writer was a fifth-grader in 1965, his American history textbook showed a graphic of “America’s Freedoms.” The textbook cited freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and free enterprise. It is almost inconceivable that any American history textbook published today would praise free enterprise.



Rewriting history: Howard Zinn wrote *A People’s History of the United States*, a book that is often cited in America’s classrooms. Unfortunately, this book, which has sold over two million copies, is full of Marxist propaganda, portraying the country as one in which an oppressor group preys upon various oppressed groups. (Photo credit: AP Images)

It is sad but true that students today are offered almost nothing about the failures of socialism, but an



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abundance of the supposed sins of the Founding Fathers and frequent criticism of the alleged failures of free enterprise.

For example, George Washington is regularly called a deist — a person who believes the creator of the universe is a disinterested deity who does not intervene in human affairs. But the historical evidence is overwhelming that Washington was a conventional believer in God, Jesus Christ, and the afterlife. On his tomb at Mount Vernon are inscribed words from Scripture, quoting Jesus, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” To the extent that America’s Christian history and roots are mentioned at all, it is to demonize Christianity.

Another attempt to defame a Founding Father is the contention that Thomas Jefferson had fathered at least one child, and probably multiple children, by his slave Sally Hemings. The supposed “proof” of this contention is that 1998 DNA findings linked Jefferson to descendants of Hemings. What is never — or almost never — quoted in this controversy are the words of Dr. Eugene Foster, the man who conducted the DNA tests. He specifically rejected the conclusions of a *Nature* magazine article that presented as a fact that Sally’s son, Eston Hemings, was fathered by Jefferson. Foster said he was “embarrassed by the blatant spin of the *Nature* article.” He added that the genetic findings of the DNA study “do not prove that Thomas Jefferson was the father of one of Sally Hemings’ children.... We have never made that claim. My experience with this matter so far tells me that no matter how often I repeat it, it will not stop the media from saying what they want to.... I am angered by it.”

The Lies of the 1619 Project

The leftists who undermine Washington, Jefferson, and the Constitution have an agenda, which is to use a Marxist version of American history in public schools to transform America into a different country. The 1619 Project is, as Richard Land wrote in the *Christian Post*, “revisionist historical fiction by Marxist cultural theory and political ideology attempting to show that America was an evil and racist society from the beginning.” According to the 1619 Project, America’s true founding was not in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence, in 1607 with the first English settlers in Jamestown, or in 1620 when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, but rather when the first black Africans landed at Jamestown in 1619.

According to this theory, now being taught as a fact to millions of America’s public-school students, America was founded upon slavery and the first black Africans who were brought to Jamestown in 1619 were the first slaves in Colonial America. Actually, they were slaves before they were brought to Jamestown by pirates, but they became indentured servants in Virginia, as slavery was not legal in the colony until several years later. The unsupported theory asserts that slavery was somehow America’s “original sin,” but there was nothing “original” about slavery in America: Slavery had existed in all cultures and continents throughout human history. Almost all persons brought to the English colonies from Africa were already slaves in Africa, sold to European slave traders by black Africans. On top of that, no mention is made of the first legal slave owner in America, a black man named Anthony Johnson.



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Based on lies: The 1619 Project is based on the false assertion that American history really began when the first black Africans arrived on the shores of Jamestown in 1619. The project also claims that the War for Independence was fought to preserve slavery — an assertion with no historical basis whatsoever.

The late Walter Williams of George Mason University called the assertions of the 1619 Project that America “created” slavery a “favorite leftist tool.” Williams, who was black, said, “Slavery is by no means peculiar, odd, unusual or unique to the U.S.”

The lies of the 1619 Project are taught in many public schools across the country, but even many liberal historians consider it phony history. The project even argues that the decision to declare independence from the British was for the purpose of preserving and promoting slavery. In fact, the *Times*’ own fact-checker identified such flaws, yet the paper published the lies anyway.

Gordon Wood, a Pulitzer Prize-winning professor emeritus at Brown University and one of America’s premier historians on Colonial and early American history, wrote that the idea America was founded upon the institution of slavery is “so wrong in so many ways.” He added, “I think the important point to make about slavery is that it had existed for thousands of years without substantial criticism,” and was “widely prevalent in Africa and Asia.”

Wood noted that it was “the American Revolution that makes [slavery] a problem for the world. And the first real anti-slave movement takes place in North America. So, this is what’s missed by these essays in the 1619 Project.”

The 1619 Project was conceived by a “journalist” working for the *New York Times*, Nikole Hannah-Jones. Her 1995 letter to the editor illustrates her racist ideology. She wrote, “The white race is the biggest murderer, rapist, pillager, and thief of the modern world.”

Paraphrasing Professor Wood, America did not create slavery, but was the principal driving force for its abolition. Several states abolished slavery before Great Britain or France did — and long before African nations. Prior to the Constitution, when the United States was governed by the Articles of Confederation, Congress banned slavery in the Northwest Territory (which covers present-day states such as Ohio and Indiana), making it the first nation to ban slavery anywhere within its borders.

All governments and peoples are flawed, and American slavery should not be minimized. But compared



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to the rest of the world, the United States acquits itself well. It is no accident that other nations were awed by the experiment in self-government, the rule of law, and the respect for individual liberty created by the founding generation of Americans.

The American Revolution inspired peoples in Latin America to revolt against their European colonial masters. Venezuelan patriot Francisco de Miranda, seeing South America begin to throw off Spanish rule, counseled fellow Latin American patriots, "Two examples lie before our eyes: the American Revolution and the French Revolution. Let us discreetly imitate the first; let us most carefully avoid the disastrous effects of the second."

Far too many Americans have been taught history that's not true. When parents express concern about the 1619 Project, the Left simply renames it, as they have done in previous efforts to advance their agenda. That agenda is on full display in Congress with the "Civics Secures Democracy Act." While American children should be taught about our form of government, the very name of this bill reveals the problem: The United States is not a democracy. The purpose of government as the Founders saw it was not to guarantee that the will of the majority prevailed, but to see that liberty prevailed. Another problem with the bill is that the Constitution does not authorize any federal role in education. Allowing educrats to dictate how American history and civics are taught will ensure that children grow up either ignorant of or antagonistic to our nation's founding principles.

It will be difficult to reverse the Marxist lies that permeate public-school curricula. There are still some good history teachers, but they are a minority. Every year, new history teachers graduate who have been indoctrinated in the false narrative that America was founded on racism. If parents want children to learn true American history, that's no longer likely to occur in American classrooms.

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