



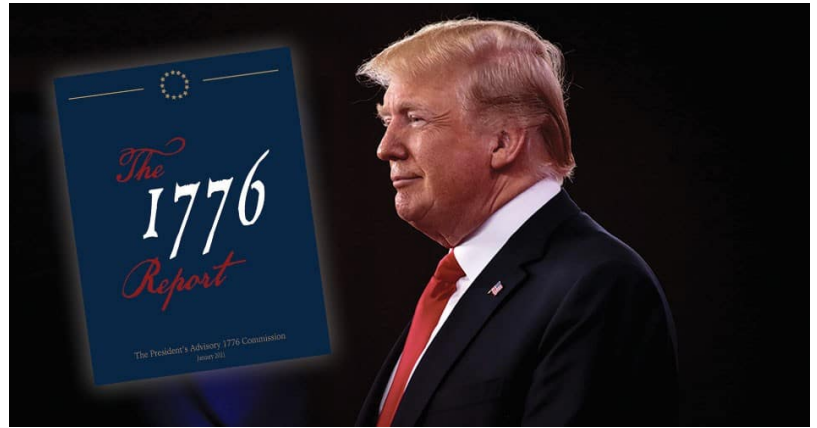
Written by [Steve Byas](#) on February 19, 2021

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Trump's 1776 Report on American History Hated by the Left

On his first day in office, President Joe Biden axed the advisory committee on American history created by a panel of 18 scholars put together by President Donald Trump — The 1776 Commission. Biden dissolved the panel, arguing it “sought to erase America’s history of racial injustice.”

The *1776 Report*, released by the commission on January 18, has faced withering criticism from the Left both in and out of academia. The American Historical Association even condemned it because it glorifies the Founding Fathers and criticizes those who sought to undo the nation’s founding principles in the Progressive Era.



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In other words, the *1776 Report* is being opposed because it conflicts with the goal of those who wish to transform America and are willing to distort the truth of its founding to accomplish that objective.

Of course, the report does *not* seek to “erase America’s history of racial injustice,” as Biden put it. Instead, it presents a much more accurate picture of the country than is found in far too many universities, high schools, and the popular culture.

“The Commission’s first responsibility is to produce a report summarizing the principles of the American founding and how those principles have shaped our country,” the report itself declares in its opening paragraphs. Rather than dwelling on every negative about the country, to the exclusion of those historical facts that should both make American citizens proud and serve as an example to the rest of the world, the report is actually a balanced look at our nation’s history.

It should be noted that if America is as bad a place as the Left makes it out to be, it’s not likely that millions of people from across the globe would have chosen to move here. Yet, they always have, since Colonial days.

The American “story” has its “share of missteps, errors, contradictions and wrongs,” the report admits, but notes that no nation “has perfectly lived up to the universal truths of equality, liberty, justice, and government by consent. But no nation before America ever dared state those truths as the formal basis for its politics, and none has strived harder, or done more, to achieve them.”

One wonders how the report’s critics could seriously argue with that statement, when America is compared with the other nations of the world, both historically and in contemporary times.

Among the statements in the report that have elicited criticism is its calling our form of government “a republic.” *Slate* (a left-wing publication) writer Rebecca Onion even said the word republic is “itself a dog whistle.” You see, any opposition to the agenda of the Left is called racist, as evidenced by the



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mantra of the Left in recent years of ascribing any opposition as just an effort to promote “white supremacists.”

The Founders Rejected the Anti-freedom Ideology of Their Day

It is true that the Founders were not looking to create a country on the political philosophy of Biden or *Slate*. Instead, the Founders rejected the prevailing political ideology of their own day — the divine right of kings, the “assertion that God appoints some men, or some families, to rule and consigns the rest to be ruled,” as the report argues. What the Founders offered instead can be found in the Declaration of Independence, which the report says “speaks of both ‘the laws of nature and of nature’s God,’ an appeal ‘to both reason and revelation as the foundation of the underlying truth of the document’s claims.’”

“The core assertion of the Declaration, and the basis of the Founders’ political thought,” the report notes, “is that all men are created equal.” And “if all men are equal, then none may by right rule another without his consent.”

Of course, the concept of “equality” is misunderstood, either through ignorance or by design. “It does not mean that all human beings are equal in wisdom, courage, or any of the other virtues and talents that God and nature distribute unevenly among the human race,” the report correctly asserts. “Natural equality,” it continues, “requires not only the consent of the governed but also the recognition of fundamental human rights — including but not limited to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness — as well as the fundamental duty or obligation of all to respect the rights of others.”

While far too many today see government as a vehicle to redistribute wealth or to impose secular values on the rest of society, the report accurately states, “Indeed, the very *purpose* of government is to secure these rights, which exist independently of government.”

Next, the report explains that the “bedrock upon which the American political system is built is the rule of law. The vast difference between tyranny and the rule of law is a central theme of political thinkers back to classical antiquity. The idea that the law is superior to rulers is the cornerstone of English constitutional thought as it developed over the centuries.”

That professional historians would denigrate this report says more about them than about the report itself. It can be reasonably inferred that these academic historians are more motivated by their secular progressive desires than anything that can be found by studying the actual historical record.

In stark contrast, the panel that produced this report clearly understands the concepts and history that produced the U.S. Constitution. The Framers had no intention to create a government that would redistribute wealth or impose secular and radical social values. They wanted a government that would protect God-given rights and leave the population free to pursue happiness. To accomplish this, their Constitution divided the government into three logical branches. “Concentrating executive, legislative, and judicial power into the same hands,” the report notes, citing James Madison, is “the very definition of tyranny.”

The Founders’ desire, the report states, was to create a government strong enough to have the power to *secure* rights “without having so much power as to enable or encourage it to *infringe* rights.”

The report provides a good summary of the principle of federalism: “They also believed that the role of



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the federal government should be limited to performing those tasks that only a national government can do, such as providing for the nation's security," adding "most tasks were properly the responsibility of the states."

How Distorting Our History Can Be So Dangerous

Much of the report is actually very simple, but the need to address such basic knowledge about our nation's founding should be obvious when surveying the unconstitutional actions of modern-day public officeholders and judges and the extent to which America has drifted from its constitutional mooring. For example, earlier in our nation's history, it would not have been necessary to explain to adults why a *written* Constitution is so important, and why limited government is such a desirable thing — but today the report explains that the real meaning of limited government is "not that the government's size or funding levels remain small, but that government's powers and activities must remain limited to certain carefully defined areas and responsibilities as guarded by bicameralism, federalism, and the separation of powers."

The Founders added the Bill of Rights to the Constitution so as to further limit the power of the federal government. "Substantive rights are not granted by government; any just government exists only to secure these rights," the report adds, citing the Ninth Amendment's assertion that the Bill of Rights "was a selective and not an exclusive list."

All of this concern about tyrannical government seems rather unimportant to the critics of the report. Instead, they assert that the study of American history should be focused on what was and is wrong with the country, such as the history of slavery. The report does cover slavery — at some length, actually. But rather than simply tar our Founders and the founding with the assertion that our nation's history was all about promoting and protecting the institution of slavery (as is the thesis of the *New York Times'* 1619 Project), the *1776 Report* seeks to analyze and explain it in the context of the times.

In contrast to the *1776 Report*, which he lauds, Richard Land wrote in *The Christian Post*, "The 1619 Project is revisionist historical fiction driven by Marxist cultural theory and political ideology attempting to show that America was an evil and racist society from the beginning."

"Many Americans labor under the illusion that slavery was somehow a uniquely American evil," the *1776 Report* explains: "The unfortunate fact is that the institution of slavery has been more the rule than the exception throughout human history." Rather than argue that America was founded principally to advance slavery, the report offers evidence that the Founders knew that slavery was antithetical to the principles outlined in the Constitution, and fully expected it to end. For example, "The Northwest Ordinance, a pre-Constitution law passed to govern the western territories ... explicitly bans slavery from those territories and from any states that might be organized there." (It should also be noted that this was more than 40 years before slavery was abolished in the British Empire.)

Furthermore, "The foundation of our Republic planted the seeds of the death of slavery in America. The Declaration's unqualified proclamation of human equality flatly contradicted the existence of human bondage and ... set the stage for abolition. Indeed, the movement to abolish slavery *that first began in the United States* led the way in bringing about the end of legal slavery."

No less an abolitionist than Frederick Douglass — born a slave — is offered by the report as an example that it was well understood that America's founding was *not* for the purpose of perpetuating slavery,



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quoting him as calling the Constitution a “glorious liberty document.”

Gordon Wood, professor emeritus at Brown University and a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, who was not on the panel that produced the *1776 Report*, dismissed the 1619 Project’s assertion that the country was founded on slavery as “so wrong in so many ways.” He added, “You can find quotation after quotation from people seriously thinking that slavery was going to wither away in several decades. Now we know they couldn’t have been more wrong. But they lived with illusions.... We may be living with illusions too. One of the big lessons of history is to realize how the past doesn’t know its future. We know how the story turned out, and we somehow assume they should know what we know.... They don’t know their future any more than we know our future.”

Wood, who is considered one of America’s premier historians on Colonial and early American history, added, “I think the important point to make about slavery is that it had existed for thousands of years without substantial criticism, and it existed all over the New World. It also existed elsewhere in the world,” in addition to being “widely prevalent in Africa and Asia. There is still slavery today in the world.”

While slavery had existed without “substantial criticism ... it’s the American Revolution that makes it 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,” Wood noted. It is also missed by the critics of the *1776 Report*.

Progressives, Communists, Fascists, and National Socialists

Another area of the report that left-wing journalists and academicians find disturbing is its criticisms of “progressivism,” an early 20th-century movement that opposed the founding principles of the country. It was the so-called progressives who developed the idea that we live under a “living” Constitution, the report states. They offer the example of President Woodrow Wilson, who was a champion of the Progressive movement, an academic historian before he became president, and a man who roundly criticized the Constitution.

Wilson advocated government by the bureaucratic state, which the report calls a “shadow government [that] never faces elections and today operates largely without checks and balances.”

The report also slices up the totalitarian evils of fascism and communism. “Though ideological cousins, the forces of Fascism and Communism were bitter enemies in their wars to achieve world domination. What united both totalitarian movements was their utter disdain for natural rights and free peoples.” In a statement that no doubt infuriates today’s “progressives,” the report asserts, “Like the Progressives, [Italian Fascist dictator Benito] Mussolini sought to centralize power under the management of so-called experts.”

While the report accurately compares the similarities of Adolf Hitler’s movement with Fascism, one criticism I would offer of the report is that it calls Hitler’s movement “Nazi” three times without explaining that the word Nazi is simply a shortened form of the full name of Hitler’s political party — the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. In other words, Hitler’s movement was *socialist*, and referring to it merely as *Nazi* instead of as National Socialist obscures this important fact. It is sort of like calling a communist a “commie.”

In addition to its excellent description of the founding principles of the United States, the report



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concludes with calling for a “national renewal,” arguing, “All the good things we see around us — from the physical infrastructure, to our high standards of living, to our exceptional freedoms — are direct results of America’s unity, stability, and justice, all of which in turn rest on the bedrock of our founding principles. Yet today our country is in danger of throwing this inheritance away.”

The principal weapon of the moment for the Left — which despises the nation’s founding principles — appears to be to dismiss anyone who stands in its way as just a white supremacist. The report laments that “we have moved toward a system of explicit group privilege that, in the name of ‘social justice,’ demands equal results and explicitly sorts citizens into ‘protected classes’ based on race and other demographic categories.”

To prevent Americans from throwing away our precious inheritance — which has attracted immigrants from across the globe — the report argues, “we must teach our founding principles and the character necessary to live out those principles. This includes restoring patriotic education that teaches the truth about America. That doesn’t mean ignoring the faults in our past, but rather viewing our history clearly and wholly, with reverence and love.”

It’s noteworthy that historian David Walsh recently tweeted his own castigation of the report. “In tone the *1776 Report* was identical to a John Birch Society pamphlet.” The John Birch Society is the parent organization of The New American, and it has been advocating for education of the general population with constitutionalist principles since its founding over a half-century ago. The “tone” of the report is similar to the excellent patriotic literature produced by the Society — and similar to the wise words of those Founders who gave us this great land.

Hopefully, this *1776 Report* will be read — and heeded — by millions of Americans.



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