Written by **Selwyn Duke** on November 29, 2025

Ken Burns Burns America With Revolutionary War Revisionism in New Docuseries

Napoleon Bonaparte once said that "history is a series of agreed-upon myths." Famed documentarian Ken Burns may agree, too, to the point where he has reportedly become one of the myth makers.

AP Images
Ken Burns

At issue is a new six-part, 12-hour-long series titled *The American Revolution* (TAR) which, say critics, strays into anti-American fiction. It's apparently another example of the revisionist history responsible for spawning millions of "Americans" who take no pride in their country or who, worse still, despise it.

What's more, the work is the result of almost eight years of toil. That's more than long enough to get things right; instead, Burns got things left.

AMAC (the Association of Mature American Citizens) reported on the series Tuesday, starting out mentioning its strengths:

> To its credit, the series is extensive. It highlights the Revolution's complexity as a struggle against the British Crown, a civil war between patriots and loyalists, and, too often overlooked, part of a global conflict fought between Britain and France.
>
> Yet from the opening minutes, it becomes clear that this series is not simply an attempt to present the Revolution as it occurred.
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> … Case in point, the documentary does not begin with George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, or even King George III. Instead, it opens with what amounts to a land-acknowledgment sequence, featuring the words of a spokesman for the "Six Nations" of the Iroquois Confederacy.
>
> The viewer is told that the Iroquois understood the rising value of their lands after the arrival of European settlers, but that "white people" believed they did not. This quickly portrays the colonists in a negative light.

When Your Land Is Fantasy-land

That's perhaps an understatement. In fact, Burns actually stated in an October NPR interview that the Revolution's impetus wasn't desire for freedom and rights. It wasn't a yearning for self-determination.

It was, rather, to steal Indian land.

The central motivating force — "we're not taught this in school," Burns told NPR — wasn't "taxes and

representation." Though these factors were "super important," he said, the war effort was really about "Indian land." His documentary reflects this fancy, too.

Addressing this, American Thinker (AT) wrote Tuesday:

> This is obscene historical revisionism. While it's true that many people wanted to negotiate with Indian tribes to purchase land in the west, that is where the evidence ends. Yet Burns flogs this canard repeatedly throughout the first half-hour of Episode 1.
>
> To go beyond that and claim that a desire to steal Indian land motivated the colonists generally — or the Founders particularly — to rebel against Britain lacks a single iota of fact in a massive historic record. Burns's claim is based on nothing more than — to quote Professor Sean Wilentz's masterful condemnation of the 1619 Project for similar unsubstantiated calumnies — "imputation and inventive mindreading."

In fact, AT asserts that from wars to coups, more English blood has been shed over taxation than anything else. (The site provides numerous examples.) In other words, the Revolution in this regard was par for the course.

The Iroquois Ploy

But this isn't TAR's only apparently false narrative. As the *Washington Examiner* told us Thursday, quoting a TAR opening segment:

> "Long before 13 British colonies made themselves into the United States, the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy — Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Tuscarora, Oneida, and Mohawk — had created a union of their own that they called the Haudenosaunee — a democracy that had flourished for centuries," the narrator says.
>
> … Burns would have viewers believe that Native Americans were responsible for the flowering of American democracy. But as a number of historians and writers have noted, this is entirely false. In fact, the idea that the Iroquois inspired America's founders is an old theory that was debunked long ago. As the writer Dan McLaughlin put it: "it is agitprop masquerading as scholarship, in the same way that the 1619 Project relied upon cherry-picking scraps of the historical record and hoping nobody noticed the rest of the facts." Later, Burns claims that George Washington "fired the very first shot" of the French and Indian War, a conflict that helped precipitate the Revolution. But this too is another claim that was long ago dismissed.

An Erudite Bunch

As for the Iroquois ploy, AT illustrates the claim's inanity. While the Iroquois had no writing system and hence no written history, by 1754, the site writes,

> all British citizens with an education [e.g., the Founders] were steeped in history. They were intimately familiar with the republic of ancient Rome in 509 BC, the virtues and weaknesses of democracy from ancient Athens in 508 BC, and the workings of confederations, which had existed since the Tribes of Israel joined together after the Exodus in [1446] BC. By 1754, the

> most famous confederacy in Europe was the centuries-old Holy Roman Empire, of which the British King was an "elector" for Hanover. And the British, with the Magna Carta of 1215 and the creation of elected Parliament in the 14th century, had created far more democratic institutions with stricter separation of powers than the Iroquois Confederacy ever dreamed of having.

This said, Benjamin Franklin did mention the Iroquois' government. But he, AT adds, "obviously long familiar with the notion of a confederacy, was saying only that if the Iroquois could do it, anybody could."

Really, claiming the Founders were so ignorant that they had to learn proper governance from stone-age people reflects ignorance itself.

"Practically Unwatchable"

Yet Burns' greatest trespass, the *Washington Examiner* also informs, is his

> insistence on stripping the majesty away from the Revolution and our founders.
>
> … [T]he script and countless commentators routinely appear to constantly connect everything to Native Americans "losing land" or slavery. In fact, neither played a seminal part in the Revolution. To be sure, both played some role, one that was neglected or overlooked for many years. Yet Burns gives them undue prominence and attention. The constant insistence on bringing these topics up makes the film practically unwatchable.

In reality and as I've frequently explained in a way I've never yet heard refuted, we needn't emphasize the negatives at all. (We especially shouldn't when teaching children history.) But just ponder a 2023 poll showing that only 16 percent of Gen Z is proud to live in America. Just ponder a 2024 poll showing that 40 percent of that generation considers the Founders more villainous than heroic.

Ken Burns is the reason why — he and thousands of other like-minded cultural devolutionaries who've been undermining America for decades. It's just as if one spouse consistently endeavored to demonize the family and its ancestors in his children's eyes. After 15 years of such indoctrination, you wouldn't be surprised if the kids hated the family. You'd only hope they wouldn't burn down the house.

And, in fact, that is essentially what millions of demoralized Americans are doing to our national house.

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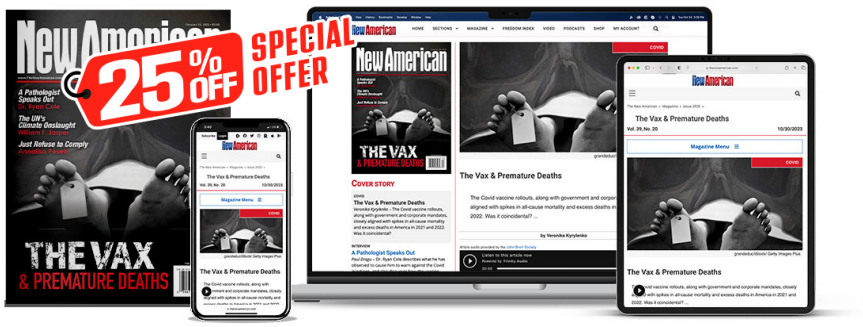

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