



Trump Signs Executive Order Establishing 1776 Commission

A notice posted on the White House website on November 2 stated that President Trump had just [signed an order](#) to establish what he calls the 1776 Commission — an idea he first proposed in September.

Trump began his executive order by summarizing some of the principles cherished by Americans since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He explained that the purpose of the 1776 Commission is “to better enable a rising generation to understand the history and principles of the founding of the United States in 1776 and to strive to form a more perfect Union.” (The phrase “to form a more perfect Union” comes from the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.)

In outlining the purpose of the 1776 Commission, Trump included the following points:

- The American founding envisioned a political order in harmony with the design of “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” seeing the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as embodied in and sanctioned by natural law and its traditions.
- The formation of a republic around these principles marked a clear departure from previous forms of government, securing rights through a form of government that derives its legitimate power from the consent of the governed.
- Throughout its national life, our Republic’s exploration of the full meaning of these principles has led it through the ratification of a Constitution, civil war, the abolition of slavery, Reconstruction, and a series of domestic crises and world conflicts.

However, Trump lamented, despite these proud accomplishments, our heritage is being maligned:

Against this history, in recent years, a series of polemics grounded in poor scholarship has vilified our Founders and our founding. Despite the virtues and accomplishments of this Nation, many students are now taught in school to hate their own country, and to believe that the men and women who built it were not heroes, but rather villains. This radicalized view of American history lacks perspective, obscures virtues, twists motives, ignores or distorts facts, and magnifies flaws, resulting in the truth being concealed and history disfigured.

While the absence of quality education that upholds our nation’s historic values has existed for decades, the timing of Trumps’ proposal was made more urgent by the publication in a September 2019 issue of the *New York Times Magazine* of an article by Nikole Hannah-Jones launching the 1619 Project, which asserted that “anti-black racism,” slavery, systemic oppression, and other evils are embedded “in the very DNA” of America.

Support for the article was not even unanimous among the *Times*’ writers. *Times* opinion columnist Bret Stephens wrote an opinion piece October 9 calling the 1619 Project a “failed” enterprise that was built on the faulty premise that slavery, not the Declaration of Independence, was the driving force that forged the nation.

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Written by [Warren Mass](#) on November 3, 2020

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