



CENTER FOR 1776

Fighting for a Pro-America, America

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June 28, 2021

As we approach the 250th anniversary of our country's founding, we find ourselves at a political crossroads. Our Nation is more polarized than ever before, and American patriotism and the values that founded the greatest political experiment of all time are under attack. "Americans are deeply divided about the meaning of their country, its history, and how it should be governed. This division is severe enough to call to mind the disagreements between the colonists and King George, and those between the Confederate and Union forces in the Civil War" ([1776 Commission Report, 2021, p. 1](#)). The America First Policy Institute (AFPI) will disseminate the truth about the American founding into our Nation's schools and homes to restore national unity and pride through a renewed understanding of our founding.



WHERE IS AMERICA NOW

Unpatriotic elites and corporations across the country have used their power and money to create and normalize the narrative that America and the American founding are inherently bad—a narrative that to be patriotic is to be racist. That storyline is now being imposed on our children in schools across the country. This sort of hateful rhetoric has created a wave of anti-American sentiment. American pride reached a 2-decade low in 2020, with only 63 percent of adults reporting to feel “extremely proud” or “very proud” to be American ([Brenan, 2020](#)).

There are many who would like to revise history and re-educate America with selective and skewed information about how our country evolved. They see the founding of our Nation and the development of our Constitution as inherently, systemically, and irredeemably racist ([The 1619 Project](#)). They believe the same about the law and legal institutions of the United States. They interpret our rights as negotiable privileges bestowed by the government instead of God-given, natural rights embedded deeply, even if imperfectly, into the central premise of the American founding. As the Declaration of Independence states, “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Our forefathers left their native lands to embark on a journey across the ocean to pursue civil and religious freedom. With an unyielding spirit and boundless work ethic, they formed settlements across the land. Until July 4, 1776, there were no “American people,” there were just millions of people living in 13 colonies across North America. These people made an assertion for Independence on the foundation of shared values not shared blood or ethnicity ([1776 Commission Report, 2021, p. 3](#)). With the Declaration of Independence, we became the American people—not yet possessing political sovereignty but unified by a common vision. Like all other things, America is not perfect and does not have a perfect history. This Nation has had its fair share of shortcomings and wrongdoings, but its people possess a spirit of hope and sacrifice.

Deeply enshrined in the Declaration of Independence is the principle of equality, encapsulated in the words that outlined the basis for the experiment; “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” In his “I Have a Dream” speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, “When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.” We have not always been a Nation that has upheld our promise of equality, but America has fought to exemplify these words and bring them to fruition. We have worked to weave those unalienable rights into the beliefs and laws in this country. The remarkable freedoms Americans now enjoy are a direct result of the foundation laid by our Founders, the dedication of the American people to such core values, and the fidelity of institutions to these principles. These freedoms would not have been possible if not for America’s unity, faith, justice, and steadiness over the last 2 centuries.



The Founders declared that the future and stability of the country hinged upon our leaders preserving, protecting, and defending the Constitution that binds us together. As laid out in Article II section 1 of the United States Constitution, the President in his Oath of Office swears “that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States” (U.S. Const. art. II, § 1). Article VI of the United States Constitution states that “The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution” and 5 U.S. Code § 3331 extends the oath to support and defend the Constitution to all individuals elected or appointed to an office of honor or profit in the civil service or uniformed services (U.S. Const. art. VI; 5 U.S. Code § 3331.Oath of Office, 1966). The decision to include this oath in the Constitution was not made lightly but rather after the lengthy debate during the Constitutional Convention on May 29, 1787 (Article 6, Clause 3: Records of the Federal Convention, 1787). It was an intentional act by our Founders to protect our Democracy.

The political rise of wokeness, social justice, and divisive concepts like “action civics” and Critical Race Theory (CRT) have caused our leaders to falter on this oath. Our leaders are not directly denouncing the Constitution, but they are undermining its principles by promoting an idea that America and its institutions were not founded on liberty and equality but instead on oppression. Elected officials, the media, and influencers have created woke education plans and disseminated them into thousands of schools ([Burke et al., 2021](#)). The goal of action civics was described in *Education Week* as “not only to teach students how their government works but to harness that knowledge to launch them into collective action on issues they care about ([Gewertz, 2019](#)).” This form of teaching is highly controversial, as some view this legitimizing political protests for class credit.

The intellectual origins of CRT go back to the critical legal studies movement of the 1960s and 1970s that was a byproduct of Marxist critical theory ([Britannica, n.d.-a](#)). CRT was officially organized in 1989 and can be explained as follows: “critical race theorists hold that the law and legal institutions in the United States are inherently racist insofar as they function to create and maintain social, economic, and political inequalities between whites and non-whites, especially African Americans ([Britannica, n.d.-b](#)).” CRT is a Marxist approach to social and racist unrest. It replaces the traditional Marxist belief in an imbalance of power between workers and capitalists, believing in an imbalance of power between white and non-white citizens.

Promoting these concepts and false rhetoric about America and its founding leads to a lack of faith in the Constitution and the institutions it prescribes. Politicians have divided Americans into categories of “oppressors” and “oppressed” and continue to perpetuate the notion that racism is inextricably embedded in the laws and social constructs of our country ([Britannica, n.d.-b](#)). Top political leaders have even explicitly stated, “our country was founded on racism,” instilling a feeling of shame in being American ([Piro, 2019](#)). These sentiments have divided our Nation and created an inherent distrust in our Founders, their



intentions, and our founding documents. Such messages undermine trust in our laws and institutions, just as CRT's rejection of color-blindness and meritocracy threatens to undermine morale in the workplace by making immutable physical characteristics the basis for promotion rather than effort and success ([Safdar & Eisen, 2020](#)). Doing this is not preserving, protecting, and defending the Constitution; it is undermining its formation. It also undermines faith in the institutions that the Constitution defines—institutions that throughout history have, and will continue to, preserve the structure of our republic and ensure all citizen's unalienable rights are protected.

Divisive policies that separate people based on race and identity have become a cornerstone of political debate and have taken control of policymaking, pushing us further away from the intent of our founding principles. For example, on their first day in office, the [Biden Administration disbanded the 1776 Advisory Commission. The Commission](#) was established under the Trump Administration to restore a genuine understanding of the American founding. President Biden taking this action during his first day in office illuminates the significance placed on the issue. Conversely, candidates are running campaigns on the promise that they will protect and promote pro-America education and defend America's founding. [Elected officials](#) and [candidates](#) are signing pledges, and [elected officials are passing legislation](#) to keep “divisive concepts” like CRT out of their schools.

From the White House to local school boards, hundreds of policies have been proposed in favor and opposition to woke policies that reframe history. The Department of Education (DoEd), on April 19, 2021, presented two priorities for the American History and Civics Education programs. Priority one pushes “projects that incorporate racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse perspectives into teaching and learning,” and priority two involves “promoting information literacy skills ([Proposed Priorities—American History and Civics Education, 2021](#)).” In this proposed rule, “promoting information literacy skills” encourages action civics, and grant applications will be prioritized if they are designed to promote “understanding their own biases when reviewing information, as well as uncovering and recognizing bias in primary and secondary sources ([Proposed Priorities—American History and Civics Education, 2021](#)).” These proposed priorities would direct funding towards divisive and indoctrinating theories that have the potential to [violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and their authorizing statute](#), which prohibits exclusion from participation in, denials of benefits of, and discrimination under federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Additionally, the [American Rescue Plan](#) passed in March of 2021 required school districts to reserve 20 percent of funds for “evidence-based” interventions that “respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs,” including antiracist therapy and disrupting whiteness ([Eden, 2021](#)).

The legislative branch also advances these policies. On numerous occasions, Congress has proposed to direct hundreds of millions of dollars toward civics education programs that promote teaching wokeness, social justice, Marxism, and encourage action civics. The Bi-partisan [Civics Secures Democracy Act](#), S.879, introduced this year, would give the federal government a significant amount of discretion in awarding \$1 billion in federal grants that



could be leveraged to promote revisionist history, encourage protests and political demonstrations, impose a national curriculum, and push the teaching of divisive concepts.

The debate over these policies does not stop at the federal level. Several states and school districts have either proposed policies that prioritize divisive concepts or, to the contrary, policies that prevent such concepts from entering the classroom. North Carolina's largest school district launched a campaign against "whiteness in educational spaces" and instructed teachers to ignore parents' concerns about their equity programs ([Rufo, 2021c](#)). In Florida, Governor DeSantis [signed a bill](#) not only to oppose Marxist teachings but to expose children to actual victims of communism that fled to America to facilitate a better understanding of the great freedoms in America. On one side, politicians will continue to use every level of government to proliferate anti-American policies because they believe that systemic racism and white supremacy are plaguing America ([Shalal, 2021](#)). On the other side, politicians believe that there are dark parts of our history that we must honestly address but that our founding principles are inherently good, and we must preserve them.

The United States has worked hard to develop into a country driven by character, work ethic, and virtue, not race and identity. After conducting 11 years of research on 193 countries, [Dr. Kathleen Brush found](#) that the United States is a leader among nations in fighting racism and has made immense progress toward eliminating discriminatory actions. The burgeoning movement of race-centric, anti-American thought and rhetoric threaten to dismantle that very achievement by placing citizens in racial categories. Each category has its own set of rules, trainings, and guidelines. From government programs to curb "whiteness" at local schools to COVID-19 funding that only targets certain ethnic and minority groups, government policies continue to divide our Nation by race ([Bustillo, 2021](#); [Eden, 2021](#)). These policies are not a step forward in addressing racism in the country. They are the opposite—a step back into a time when it was acceptable to treat people differently based on the color of their skin.

REIMAGINED AMERICAN HISTORY IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

The concept of "reimagining" or "reframing" American history has become a popular topic since the 2019 release of the [New York Times 1619 Project](#) (The 1619 Project). The stated goal of this project is "to reframe American history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our Nation's birth year" ([The 1619 Project](#)). The 1619 Project claims that one of the primary reasons the colonists declared their independence from Great Britain was to protect slavery. The 1619 Project purports that slavery was a primary driver of economic growth and infused brutality into American capitalism today. These claims are backed by very few sources and have been widely disputed.

Gordon Wood, the leading historian of the American Revolution, Pulitzer Prize winner, and Bancroft Prize winner, led a team of five historians in a letter to the editor expressing their strong concerns and urging the *New York Times* to issue corrections of all of the errors and distortions in the 1619 Project ([Bynum et al., 2019](#)). In addition, a group of [12 Civil War](#)



[historians](#) wrote a letter to the editor to express deep concern with the 1619 Project, stating their concern that the materials are to become the basis of school curriculum, and requesting “the *New York Times* withhold any steps to publish and distribute The 1619 Project” ([Allen et al., 2020](#)). Nikole Hannah-Jones, editor, and co-author of the 1619 Project, stated, “I’ve always said that the 1619 Project is not a history. It is a work of journalism that explicitly seeks to challenge the national narrative and, therefore, the national memory” ([Adams, 2020](#)). It is of great concern that the widely disputed historical claims in the 1619 Project have now been turned into a [curriculum](#) that is being promoted through our schools.

This distorted “work of journalism” about our country and its founding has made it into more than 4,500 K-12 schools across the Nation ([Burke et al., 2021](#)). Historians, parents, and policymakers alike are showing concern with the false information and anti-American sentiment spreading across our Nation. [Data from a recent survey](#) indicates that an overwhelming majority of Americans oppose the use of classrooms to promote political activism to students, oppose teaching that there is no such thing as biological sex, and oppose teaching students that white people are inherently privileged while black and other people of color are inherently oppressed. A majority of those surveyed also felt “local kindergarten through 12th-grade schools’ emphasis on issues of race, gender, and activism” has increased and that “local kindergarten through 12th-grade schools have generally become more political.” [Another survey](#) of parents of K-12 students found that 75% of parents did not believe schools should teach that “the founding ideals of liberty and equality were false when they were written and America’s history must be reframed” ([Burke et al., 2021](#)).

Thousands of American schools have become systems of indoctrination where Marxist theory is commonly taught in the classroom, but ideas of capitalism are suppressed and neglected ([Bemis, 2016](#)). Courses in every subject, from [math](#) to [English](#), have fallen prey to the philosophy of CRT and teachings that place more virtue on certain identities and individuals than others—a system where victimhood, not facts, drives the debate. At the K-12 level, the [Oregon Department of Education](#) has adopted CRT in mathematics, and [California education officials](#) are urging teachers to adopt “A Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction: Dismantling Racism in Mathematics Instruction. In Cupertino, California, an elementary school required third graders to analyze their racial identities and then rank themselves according to their “power and privilege” ([Rufo, 2021a](#)). The lesson plans of public schools in Buffalo New York suggest that when students are in kindergarten, teachers ask students to compare their skin color and watch a video that illustrates dead black kids speaking to them about the dangers of being killed by “racist police and state-sanctioned violence” ([Rufo, 2021b](#)). These are just a handful of examples; K-12 curriculum like this is being taught in [schools across the country](#).

Many of our universities have promoted a culture of self-segregation, “safe spaces,” and cancel culture, where “diverse” student centers limit the attendance of certain races. At least 75 colleges and universities, including Harvard, now hold black-only graduations ([James, 2019](#)). The same segregation Dr. King fought against with every fiber of his being is currently implemented in a way that sullies his legacy. Our campuses that were once a beacon of



knowledge, discourse, and debate have limited such dialog and the competition of ideas to “free speech zones” and have continually violated First Amendment rights by implementing speaking permits and limiting speech in “safe spaces” ([Kraft, n.d.](#)). The non-profit group Foundation for Individual Rights in Education [conducted a study](#) that found over 33 percent of the more than 400 colleges and universities studied maintain policies that seriously infringe on the First Amendment rights of their students. Although this was a significant drop from 9 years ago when nearly 80 percent of colleges and universities studied had policies that seriously infringed on the first amendment rights of their students, it is still a massive problem that one in three schools maintain these policies ([The State of Free Speech on Our Nation’s Campuses, 2017](#)).

[Survey data](#) indicates that a majority of Americans do not believe that our education system should promote political activism. Yet, state, local, and federal officials find themselves constantly at odds—some fighting to keep these policies out of our Nation’s schools and others fighting to make them the central theme of our civics education programs. This year in Southlake, Texas, citizens came together to defend civics education from CRT and “diversity and inclusion plans” that would promote race-centric indoctrination and shaming. In an election for two school board positions, two City Council seats, and Mayor, three times as many ballots were cast compared to similar years in the past. These elections were won by those opposed to CRT education policies by a margin of roughly 70 percent to 30 percent ([Hixenbaugh & Hylton, 2021](#)).

Over 24 States have introduced legislation to keep divisive concepts like CRT and, in some cases, the 1619 Project in particular, out of schools ([Rufo, n.d.](#)). As of June 2021, Idaho, Iowa, Texas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee have all passed state legislation to prohibit the divisive concept and racially discriminating CRT trainings and the 1619 Project from being taught at schools or in state agencies ([Rufo, n.d.](#)). Governor DeSantis and the State of Florida have [taken numerous actions](#) to keep divisive concepts out of schools and promote patriotic education and free speech including signing [HB5](#), [SB 1108](#), and [HB 233](#). Attorneys General from 20 states have petitioned the DoED not to adopt these divisive concepts as American History and Civics Education priorities. In their [letter](#) to the United States Secretary of Education, Miquel Cardona, they referred to the proposed priorities as “a thinly veiled attempt at bringing into our states’ classrooms the deeply flawed and controversial teaching of Critical Race Theory and the 1619 Project.” The Montana State Attorney General has gone as far as to write a letter declaring CRT-based practices illegal in the state ([Rufo, 2021d](#)).

Nationwide, policies that center around race have divided rather than unite us. Negative sentiments about our country and its founding principles are disseminated by politicians, schools, and corporations alike. Policymakers vehemently disagree with one another on both the past and future intentions of our country. As we move forward, it is vital that we carefully consider the foundation of knowledge we are providing to America’s future leaders.



WHY AFPI IS ESSENTIAL

Many of those at the forefront of inspiring wokeness have descended into overtly anti-American fanaticism across the past half-decade. The rapidity with which this interpretation of the United States' origin and purpose has seized major institutions—from media to corporations to schools and beyond—is a testament to decades of preparatory work by the left in education, journalism, and culture. When American greatness and patriotism are challenged daily, we must remind all Americans about the uniqueness of our country and the significant gains that have been achieved and can still be achieved through selfless sacrifice. America is in the fight for Her life. Liberals are dismantling the America we all grew up admiring and respecting by pushing the false premise that 1619 with the arrival of slavery marked the true birth of America rather than 1776 with the Declaration of Independence ([The 1619 Project](#)). Studies show millennials being the generation least likely to be “very proud” to be American and least likely to believe in American exceptionalism ([Brenan, 2020](#)). The fall of patriotism in this country is a grave threat to the unity of society and yet another way liberal advocacy has sought to take control of the lives of Americans ([Seminara, 2020](#)).

AFPI has the courage to call all this what it is: not some long-overdue “reckoning” on any particular topic, but a perversion of our history and heritage for harmful purposes. AFPI will defend the truth about America’s founding with research, education, advocacy, data, and policies that unite and reinvigorate patriotism rather than divide and set people against each other. We will remind our citizens of and educate our children on the simple truth that America is worth fighting for. AFPI will not back down or concede ground when it comes to America.

POLICY PRIORITIES

The AFPI Center for 1776 will research and develop policies that promulgate a historically accurate, pro-American curriculum across the United States and advance the ideals upon which our Nation was founded. These policies include:

- *Researching and developing policies that investigate the efficacy of patriotic education.* At AFPI, we understand that the majority of Americans do not want political activism, discussions on race and gender, and social activism being taught in our schools. We will research and develop policies that make it easier for state, local, and federal legislators to keep these concepts out of our schools. AFPI will also provide the resources needed to understand how curriculum ends up in our schools and ways to intervene in the process.
- *Researching and developing policies focused on patriotic curriculum that state and local officials can consider implementing.* More than 24 states have introduced legislation to prohibit teaching “divisive concepts” in their schools. AFPI will work with the states to research and develop model legislation to preserve the integrity of the American school system.



- *Driving transparency on the curriculum in our schools.* [Data suggests](#) that only about 64 percent of people really pay attention to what is being taught in the kindergarten through 12th grade schools in their area. AFPI will research state and local curriculum plans and drive transparency on the content that is being taught in schools. At AFPI, we will provide the research and data needed to hold elected officials accountable and ensure increased clarity in the curriculum being taught in our schools.
- *Educating parents, school officials, and legislators.* AFPI will serve as a resource for parents and educators looking for patriotic curricula. Many aligned curriculum plans have already been produced, and AFPI will be a leader in identifying these plans and promoting them.
- *Educating America's educators.* AFPI understands that no matter how great the curriculum plan, the tough job of educating our students falls on America's teachers. AFPI will research and develop methods of professional development for educators and share these principles at AFPI-hosted teacher summits across the country.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

- **Teach:** the importance of our founding principles and America's great history to restore national patriotism and end prejudice.
- **Unite:** the American People through a renewed understanding of America's founding principles.
- **Partner:** with states and grassroots efforts to get pro-America curricula approved for use in schools statewide.
- **Build:** a robust national network of college students, parents, teachers, and community leaders to fight for patriotic education.
- **Assemble:** a coalition of people coming together to fight to preserve America and her legacy.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR AMERICANS

We are ensuring that our American values are not forgotten or reimagined and remain the foundation for our future. The fundamental truths spoken by our Founders—in addition to the government they designed and the values upon which that structure rests, both good and bad—must be the basis for which we continue to grow as a Nation. It is time to restore education. Education that is not political but is honest. Education that informs future generations of Americans of the originality and brilliance of the founding documents—and



the capacity that the values contained in these documents have to ensure American freedom lives on forever.

[Alexander Hamilton stated](#), “The safety of a republic depends essentially on the energy of a common national sentiment; on a uniformity of principles and habits; on the exemption of citizens from foreign bias and prejudice; and on the love of country which will almost invariably be found to be closely connected with birth, education, and family.” Hamilton insisted that the success of a Nation was dependent upon the preservation of a national character. The hateful rhetoric about our Nation and its founding spreading across America is not only untrue, but it is has had a devastating effect on national unity, patriotism, and the social contract of this country. AFPI will work to rebuild a strong, united, and proud America.



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