

Slavery or Freedom?

The proceedings of a conference of the
National Association of Scholars

September 14th - September 20th

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

Slavery or Freedom?

The proceedings of a conference of the
National Association of Scholars

September 14th - September 20th

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

Speakers:

William Allen
Peter Wood
Chuck DeVore
Richard Johnson
Wilfred Reilly
Carol Swain
Cathy Young
Tom Lindsay
Kevin Gutzman
Jason Ross
Joseph Fornieri
Robert Paquette
Robert Maranto
Jamie Gass
Peter Coclanis
Paul Rahe
Susan Hanssen
Diana Schaub
John Stauffer
Peter Kirsanow

The Very DNA of this Country

Peter Kirsanow

Chuck DeVore

Hi, this is Chuck DeVore. I'm the Vice President of National Initiatives with the Texas Public Policy Foundation in Austin, Texas. We are the nation's largest free market, state based think tank. We have about 110 employees. And for us, the origins of the American founding are very, very important not only for the story of the origins of the Republic of Texas, but also for the United States of America and its founding principles.

I'm delighted to be able to kick off this meeting of the National Association of Scholars and their 1620 Conference. It's a direct response to the unfortunate 1619 Project, which I see is a fabulist attempt to remake American history. And the reason why American history needs to be remade is because the premise is that America was fundamentally flawed and racist at its very founding. And that as a result, none of America's important foundational documents, not the Declaration of Independence, nor the Constitution, can really be considered legitimate. And in fact, if you listen to the 1619 Project, it's all nothing more than a plot to perpetuate, so called white superiority or supremacy.

In fact, if you look at the origins and the principles of the United States, and particularly the Declaration of Independence, what you find is a document that is quite powerful and unique in human history insofar as it's promised that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men."

If that is true, then the 1619 Project cannot be true. These are mutually exclusive things. And if you look at, the founding of the nation from its very start, there was this enormous pressure and tension between

the practical aspects of creating a nation in the face of a revolutionary struggle against what was then the strongest nation on Earth, and trying to hold together, trying to stitch together, a nation that would last and stand through the test of time. And if the Constitution was never agreed upon, you would have likely seen the southern states of the U.S., the slaveholding states, continuing on as probably an independent republic as some of the authors of the Federalist Papers were concerned about.

And if that had been the case the course of slavery in North America likely would have been different as, number one, it wouldn't have been moderated by the fact of having to exist in a union with free states. And number two, the great civil war that arose to resolve the question that, as Lincoln said, we cannot remain a house divided against itself, part free and part slave, either we must be all slave or all free. And that conflict, which really at its heart was aimed at whether or not the preamble to the Declaration was true or not, that conflict upon which some 600,000 Americans shed their blood to rectify some of the founding challenges that we had as a nation.

To me, the conflict, the Constitution, and the Declaration all together, prove the hollowness, the falseness, the perniciousness of the 1619 Project. And so here we are today, in an America that has widespread urban unrest, the feature of which is a call by basically revisionist Marxists who claim that America has no legitimacy, that America at its very core is a bigoted and racist nation, and that it must be torn down and completely rebuilt in their vision. Now, what this vision is, I don't think they've quite let us know, but we certainly can see that reparations are part of it.

There's other aspects of it that would speak to the fact that liberty is not something that they care much about. Rather, equality as they see it, in other words is they parse it out. That's what they're aiming for.

And so it's really, I think, extremely important for America's college students, for our youth, to gain a proper and right understanding of the foundation of this nation.

Was it founded with corrupted, irredeemable principles, or was it founded on something greater, something that can be aspired to, for all time, perhaps never quite reaching it because we are human? And as humans, we are imperfect as our institutions, but nevertheless, better than anything that has ever come before or ever will come in the future, in all likelihood.

So with that, I congratulate the National Association of Scholars for this upcoming conference. As a leader with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, I'm extremely proud to be able to help sponsor this event. And with that, I'd like to turn it over to Peter Wood, who's the president of the National Association of Scholars. Peter?

Peter Wood

Thank you, Chuck. And thank you, Texas Public Policy Foundation, our partner in this enterprise.

This is something new for us. We're holding a whole conference on Zoom, and we're doing it over the course of a whole week, which I think sets a record for us. We've had two day conferences in the past, but this is the first time we've had a week-long conference. But listeners, watchers, take heart. There are many breaks in this conference. And there's a little bit every day. So it's going to be an exciting week.

We've called this "Slavery or Freedom: The Conception of America." The idea here is to explore these dueling conceptions that Chuck just referenced. I think it's fairly clear that the tone that we're taking on this is that the Black Lives Matter movement, the 1619

Project, and the social unrest that has flowed out of those things are not to the good, that there are better conceptions of who we are and why we are that way.

So I'm going to run briefly through the calendar of this week. So if you have not yet made your lunch plans and so forth for the week, stay tuned here.

We're going to start in just a moment with an address by Peter Kirsanow, whom I'll introduce, it's titled, "The Very DNA of this Country." That's a phrase that comes from Nikole Hannah-Jones's 1619 Project. So we'll get there.

Later on this afternoon there's a panel discussion, titled "Absences from the 1619 Project's History." It'll go through the major things that got left out. This panel will be moderated by Texas Public Policy Foundation's own Thomas Lindsay, who also served as a member of the National Association of Scholars' board for many years. John Stauffer and Diana Schaub will be among the speakers on this event.

Tomorrow at 11am we'll kick off with, "The Spirit of the Adams Family," with an address by Susan Hansen, professor at the University of Dallas. And in the afternoon, our event is by Paul Rahe, a Hillsdale College professor of history who knows a great deal about the classical world but also has a great deal to say about modern republics.

On Wednesday at 11 we have an address, "Did Slavery make America Rich?" The question of whether slavery made America rich is the subject of the second essay in the *New York Times's* 1619 Project special edition of the magazine in August a year ago. The notion being that capitalism itself was the creation of plantations and things like double entry bookkeeping were somehow invented by slave owners to keep track of their ill-gotten gains. This fable, which has now found its way into grade school curricula across

the country, is absolutely false. We have Peter Coclanis, who will be addressing that.

At two o'clock on Wednesday, a panel discussion on "Teaching American History." Tom Lindsay is going to be the moderator again, and our speakers include Richard Johnson, Robert Maranto, and Jamie Gass.

On Thursday, we begin the day at 11 with "What Made American Slavery Distinctive?" with an address by the distinguished historian Robert Paquette. In the afternoon, Tom Lindsay will lead another panel discussion, this one on "American Ideals." The panelists are Kevin Gutzman, Jason Ross and Joseph Fornieri.

On Friday, our concluding day, there will be a panel discussion in the morning. We'll switch the panel with the speakers this time. The panel led by Tom Lindsay will include Cathy Young, Wilfred Reilly, and Carol Swain. In the afternoon, William Allen, professor of political science at Michigan State, will give our culminating address. I will be introducing him, then we will have closing remarks, both by Chuck and myself.

So that's what lies ahead this week. I hope that you can find time to attend as many of these as possible. It's going to be an exciting week. I think this is not the very first attempt of scholars to get together and respond in a thoughtful critique of the *New York Times's* 1619 Project. But it's going to be, I trust, among the best. So stay with us.

A lot has happened over the last year since this project has unrolled. Most recently, remarks from President Trump suggesting that there would be losses inflicted on schools that decide to go all in in teaching the 1619 Project. So lo and behold, this has become a major political issue in the campaign season. If you're wondering whether President Trump's

step was wise or not, this is a week in which you can learn enough to reflect on that. So with that, I would like to move to our introduction, Mr. Kirsanow.

Peter Wood

Okay, well, we're a little bit ahead of schedule then. So I'm going to bounce this back to Chuck, who is a better improviser than I am.

Chuck DeVore

Well, thank you, Peter. Let me just ask you a question. Because, you know, I served in the California Legislature for six years through 2010. And I have to say that while all lawmakers certainly swear an oath to protect and defend the United States Constitution, there is no class that one must take when you run for office, much less when.

If you look at these contending themes, if you will, kind of the fablist approach of the 1619 Project, and your own approach with scholars, perhaps more grounded in primary historical documents and the truth. What would you say, as a scholar to individuals that are within the elected sphere, you know, our politicians, you know, why is it important that they have at least a fundamentally correct understanding of the founding truths of this nation? I mean, after all, what's at stake, if politicians simply misunderstand the past?

Peter Wood

Well, we are a self-governing republic under the rule of law in principle. And to be a self-governing republic, one has to have some understanding of who we are and why we are. Thus, history is an indispensable component of the education of public servants, public leaders, especially elected leaders, who bring with them the trust of the electorate. That means having

a certain amount of just hardcore knowledge of what the institutions are and how they run.

We used to call that civics. We used to take pretty good steps to make sure that you didn't get out of grade school without a basic understanding of how the country is run. Largely, that's disappeared. Civics has been eroded away in favor of something called Social Studies. And Social Studies has been a matter more of realizing things like class structure, inequities, and the faults of the American system rather than how it's put together.

Our political leaders are, I think, in many cases, pretty ignorant of the American founding, the debates over the ratification of the Constitution, the process by which the Constitution has been amended over the centuries. All of which seems to me to be indispensable if you're going to approach the project of governing the country wisely.

So, yes, I think that you raised a key question, what should our leaders know? And how should they learn it? Learning it by the seat of the pants is not a very good approach. There should be built into our education from grade school on through law school, where most of our elected leaders have spent some time, a set of carefully thought through provisions which ensure civic literacy, or perhaps something even beyond civic literacy to a certain amount of statesmanship, which I think is a higher bar. Statesmanship meaning that the individuals understand statecraft, not just technically how the laws are made, but how they should be founded on our best understanding and wisdom of the ages.

So that's my short answer.

Chuck DeVore

Perhaps I can ask you one more question, and then you can introduce our first panelist. My understand-

ing of the 1619 Project is that one of their contentions is that somehow America invented a particularly peculiar institution in slavery. I'm rather shocked, at this contention, given that slavery still exists in the world today, and by all evidence has been around for millennia. How do you see them as first of all even credibly trying to make such a statement, number one? And number two, why? Why do you think they're doing it?

Peter Wood

Well those are interesting questions, which I could spate for quite a while, but let me take it apart this way. I'm an anthropologist. So my knowledge base is pretty broad for the whole world. Maybe it's shallow and broad, but it's broad. And I try to think of societies that do not have, or have not had, a form of slavery, and pretty much limited to a number of small scale hunter gatherer societies think of Eskimos or Kalahari Bushmen. Both of those are terms that are now out of fashion. But essentially, people living hand to mouth are not likely to want the burden of having to care for captive others.

But beyond that low level of social organization that characterizes a handful of societies, slavery is well-nigh a universal institution, or has been. All the societies that we know about in Sub Saharan Africa, in Asia, in Europe, the Middle East, were at least at one point in their history founded on slavery. It doesn't take a lot of exploration of historical sources to come to an understanding this.

Now, American slavery doesn't differ in some profound way from the slaveries that existed in other places. Well, one way which it differs is that its lifespan is pretty short, from the end of the 17th century, when it got organized in the colonies, to the end of the Civil War, was a period of American slavery.

Another way in which that it was limited was that through about three quarters of that time, it faced a domestic opposition, a rising movement to abolish the institution. That pressure back against slavery is very unusual. That's the exceptionalism in America. There was a movement from the middle of the 18th century on to get rid of this thing. So why does the *New York Times*, why does Hannah Jones and other figures adopting the voice of history, if not actually its methods, want to insist that American slavery was a unique evil?

The best case they can make, I think it's important to go to their best case, is that the existence of the institution ran counter to the announced principles, at least the principles as they were laid forth by Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence. So you can catch America in a contradiction, or in an act of hypocrisy, they say. And that's what makes American slavery different from slavery elsewhere.

I don't think there's much to that. I think we're going to hear other well informed people discussing this idea over the course of the week. But as a matter of fact, American slavery, as bad as it was, was nowhere near as bad as say, Aztec slavery, where the result was having your heart ripped out on an altar in the middle of Tlacopan or something like that, or slavery as an adjunct to human sacrifice, as it was practiced in many parts of sub Saharan Africa. We're left with a form of slavery that extracted labor from people that didn't generally see profit in killing them.

So that's the brief answer here. I think it is odd that this misrepresentation of American slavery has caught on as much as it has, but we're gonna push back. Thank you for those questions. But Peter, welcome.

Peter Kirsanow

Good to see you, Peter. And thanks for inviting me.

Peter Wood

Well, delighted to have you on. I'm going to give you a brief, semi-formal introduction. Well, it's my honor to have as our inaugural speaker at this conference, Peter Kirsanow. He's probably best known, at least to this audience, as a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. In fact, he's the longest serving such member, at least now serving. This is his fourth consecutive six-year term, beginning last year. Now, that's important for a lot of reasons. But I think maybe most important because he brings a historical perspective to a body that sometimes, especially these days, acts as though civil rights is a form of improvisation, and that the Commission is therefore free to make things up as it goes along. He's is the one of the members of the Commission saying, no, that's not right. He knows otherwise.

He is an attorney who received his JD *cum lauda* from Cleveland Marshall College of Law in 1979. His B.A. is from Cornell University. He's been a practicing lawyer his entire career, currently serving as a partner in the Cleveland firm Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff, and as the firm's Labor and Employment Group Director. He brings to that experience the experience of having served on the National Labor Relations Board for two years in 2006 and 2007. He played a key role in several significant decisions.

He's the past chair of The Center for New Black Leadership, served as an adjunct professor at his alma mater, Cleveland Marshall College of Law, and sometime in the last couple of years he's managed to publish with a major press two action packed thrillers "Target Omega" and "Second Strike." You

can buy them on Amazon—I just checked.

I'm looking forward to the edge of my seat account that he will give of racial oppression in American life. And today's talk, which is "The Very DNA of the Country" I don't think it will be amiss if I add that this is my third attempt to introduce Peter Kirsanow to a National Association of Scholars event. The first two events failed, one literally on the runway, the other when we had to cancel an event at Yale due to what could be summarized as security concerns. So he lives a life of danger at least when it comes to NAS. But he's not like the secret agent man in the old Johnny River's song who everyone he meets he stays a stranger. He is, to the contrary, a warm and convivial colleague with a deep understanding of the nation's racial discontents.

Now, before I launch him at you, I want to say that if you have questions to ask, please send them to contact@nas and we will transmit them. And on that, I welcome Peter.

Peter Kirsanow

Thanks very much, Peter, and good morning to everybody. Thank you very much for that cordial introduction. A couple things. First of all, I apologize in advance, after my remarks, I won't have an opportunity to engage in a Q&A because in my day job, unfortunately, I'm an employment lawyer, we have emergencies that arise and so I have to address one imminently.

Nonetheless, this is a very, very important topic, and I'm excited to be able to address this. I've addressed it in other forums before, it's becoming more and more urgent that this is something that I think is an all hands on deck situation.

I'm not a historian. I'm not a scholar, although sometimes I play one on TV. In this respect, I share something with Hannah Nikole Jones, who is the guiding force behind the *New York Times* version of the 1619 Project. That version, by the way, is metastasizing somewhat based on our best information. There's approximately 5,000 school districts who have adopted something like that here in my home state of Ohio. I'm involved in an effort to ensure that the 1619 Project is not implemented within our state school systems, even though it appears as if the state school board is on the verge of doing just that, having passed a resolution promoting the 1619 Project. It's just the first step.

I look at this from the standpoint of an amateur historian. Like everyone else, I took all the supposed American history courses in school, I do a copious amount of reading, and as a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for nearly 20 years, I do glance by this issue from time to time. So in that respect, what amazed me and bothered me when the 1619 Project was first announced over a year ago, when I first saw it, I knew immediately that this was something that needed to be addressed by folks such as this. Because we have seen the consequences of some version, maybe not a formal version of the 1619 Project, but with critical race theory of the late 80s forward to the present. And other, well, I hate to call it scholarship, but the Howard Zinn version of history, we have seen what I believe to be a corruption of history, distortion of history, again. Jones is using the tools of a 20th century form of oppression, to, consciously or not, present her version, and that of many on the left, of slavery in the United States. And it is nothing more than sheer propaganda. It's very ironic that they are using those tools that we've seen throughout much of the 20th century, employed in some of the most repressive regimes, to give this glowing account of the valiant travails of blacks in America. And there were valiant travails of blacks in

America, but they give it primacy that's not at all supported by the facts.

So we've seen in the last week and a half, two weeks or so, even the President of the United States has weighed in on this controversy. We see executive orders that have been prepared, not necessarily directly with respect to the 1619 Project, although he's made some noise about defunding schools related to that. I haven't seen any executive orders issued or anything from OCR. Maybe it has, but I've just not seen it yet that indicate that that's going to happen. He's also indicated that he has issues with critical race theory training at federal agencies and by federal contractors. I think that's an outstanding first step.

So last year, when the 1619 Project was implemented, the newspaper of record, having, by the way, blown the history with respect to Walter Duranty and the Ukraine famine, decides to take on this project. They stated that it was going to be an ongoing initiative that aims to, quote "reframe the country's history." Right there, "reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative." Now, placing black Americans at the very center of our national narrative, is that objectionable? No. Is it ahistorical? Well, I think it overemphasizes, unfortunately, the contributions of black Americans for a number of years and we'll get to that in a moment. But what it is, is a conscious attempt to make the country's quote, "real founding" stem from when the first American slaves arrived in Virginia as opposed to for example, you know, 1620, when the Pilgrims arrived, or 1607 when Jamestown was settled, and instead of fixing the founding of the country on a constructive event, the *New York Times* decides to define the United States by one of its signal failures, or maybe its signal failure.

So the 1619 Project, it deliberately minimizes the contributions and cultures of white Americans and magnifies and romanticizes the contributions and culture of black Americans. It's a sort of historical reparations. Ironically, in this way it's the inverse of, look, I'm an old man, I remember the textbooks from the late 50s, 60s, 70s. And I knew, because I've read more broadly, perhaps, than what our curriculum, what our reading list was like, that there were a lot of things omitted in the standard texts back then. So in this way, the 1619 Project is the inverse of what was occurring, at least in my experience, in the 50s and 60s with respect to textbook's omissions of contributions of blacks. And in the introductory essay, Hannah Nikole Jones writes, quote, "more than any other group in this country's history, we have served generation after generation, in an overlooked but vital role. It is we who have been the protectors of this democracy." End quote.

Let's face it. That's, to put it mildly, overheated rhetoric. Unfortunately, it'd be nice if that were true, but it's not true. It's inaccurate. It's propaganda. Maybe it's kind of feel good propaganda, but it's propaganda nonetheless. And later, she says, quote, "out of our unique isolation, both from our native cultures and from white America, we forged this nation's most significant original culture." Now that's defensible. That's defensible. But what the two phrases joined try to impart is this feeling as if the suppression of black Americans was something that nonetheless failed to prevent black Americans from being the organizing population in this country's history.

Now, what this has done is it's been in the zeitgeist for a while now. We see some of the consequences of this in the streets over the last three months. But it's influenced even reasonable people to make ridiculous claims supporting the notion that whites have repeatedly snatched from blacks. And this has

happened. Now, look, whites have taken credit for some things that blacks have done, but it wasn't at the core of the American experiment. Some of the achievements, for example, a few days ago, somebody named Joe Biden, who you might recognize as somebody who's been in public office for a short period of time, said that, quote, "a black man invented the lightbulb, not a white guy named Edison," end quote. Well, maybe he's reading different texts than I am. And I will admit that there were occasions in which people of various races made contributions that weren't acknowledged. But this is simply untrue. A man named Lewis Latimer had done some great work to perfect some of the filaments related to the light bulb, made some improvements upon it. But Edison invented the light bulb.

So Biden's alternate universe might be a silly example of the kind of thing that the 1619 Project promotes, but it demonstrates how the effort to put race and slavery at the heart of the American story has the potential to destabilize our understanding of our country, our country's self-conception.

The project's obsession with race, standing alone, is bad enough. But as I said at the outset, what makes it worse is this is something that's being introduced into curriculum K through 12. It's one thing when you do it in college, and maybe somebody's already had an established foundation, a student has, to adequately interpret what they're being told. But when fresh young minds are exposed to this, that's something completely different. So as with other progressive revisionism, it's likely then, when you start at K through 12, that this will become the story of the American founding or the story of America within a generation, unless there's significant pushback. And again, that means all hands on deck. It can't be just a discrete and insular group of people who do this because we're facing, unfortunately, much if not most of the academy.

You may know that better than I do. I just see these folks appearing before the Civil Rights Commission. And for a number of years, the essence of the 1619 Project was being spewed forth at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and adopted almost uncritically by many of my colleagues. Fortunately, we've got respected and accomplished historians of American history who've publicly addressed the manifold inaccuracies of the 1619 Project. And we're not just talking about historians that are in a particular niche or you know, have a particular affinity for the lost cause or anything of that nature.

As part of the National Association of Scholars's 1620 Project, Lucas Morel has written about Hannah Jones's essay regarding the 1619 Project, quote, and this goes to the point I just made about the snatching of credit from blacks and giving it to whites:

The strangest thing about the essay is the claim that transplanted Africans and their descendants were the key to American greatness. Hannah Jones cites no African principles of self-government or ideals of humanity when she quotes the famous pronouncements of the Declaration of Independence. She merely asserts that "black Americans, as much as those men cast in alabaster in the nation's capital are the nation's true 'founders.'" Ironically, however, even in this warped retelling, black Americans principle means of saving white Americans from the worst selves was not anything African, but the quintessentially American ideals of human equality and natural rights.

Precisely right. Claiborne Carson, a professor of history at Stanford who was chosen by Coretta Scott King, to oversee the publication of Martin Luther King Jr.'s papers, commented that the idea of human rights was, as I think, look, again, I'm not an historian, but what I learned is this is an enlightenment

ideal that originated with white men. I don't think they thought about this in terms of this is white enlightenment. I don't think most of us would even think about it in terms of something peculiar to whites. This was a universally human enlightenment. Nonetheless, black people became aware of the discussions related to the Enlightenment, and these ideas that were percolating throughout the founding, and said, well, look, we've got rights too. But as Morel said, these ideas originated from Western, meaning white Western, in this case, specifically American, if not Anglo culture, and were then adopted by black Americans who were brought to this continent from Africa. There's nothing peculiarly African about these ideals and they didn't originate in that continent. That's important. Those are facts. It's not a function of propaganda.

The 1619 Project reserves almost all of its, and there's a considerable amount of opprobrium, but it reserves almost all of its opprobrium toward civilization for the United States. Nikole-Jones says in her essay, quote, "those men and women who came ashore on that August day were the beginning of American slavery." This is 1619. "They were among the 12.5 million Africans who would be kidnapped from their homes and brought in chains across the Atlantic Ocean in the largest forced migration in human history until the Second World War." Before the abolishment of the international slave trade, 400,000 enslaved Africans would be sold into America. 400,000. That's a lot. But think about that. She says that almost 2 million slaves didn't survive the Middle Passage. So approximately 10.5 million slaves survived to make it to the new world. 400,000 of them, she says, were sold into slavery in America. And again, I'm using her figures. And I know that there are other figures out there, but I'm using hers. So she says 400,000 of the 10.5 million were sold into slavery in America, meaning North America, meaning what became the United States or the

infant United States.

But that begs the question, what happened to the remaining 10 million? Answer? Well, at least 4 million of them we know ended up in Brazil, which is not part of the United States of America last time I checked. I've got my little Atlas here. Sometimes it is difficult to discern between Brazil and the United States. Slavery in Brazil, you might remember, wasn't ended until 1888, even later than the United States, and Nikole Hannah-Jones and the progenitors and the supporters of the 1619 Project give the United States all kinds of hell for the fact that it was dilatory in abolishing slavery. Do we want slavery, or did we want slavery, abolished sooner, sure. But we also understand how history works, how mankind works, how humans work.

She doesn't seem angry, by the way, at the Africans who sold their fellow Africans into slavery. All her anger seems to be directed toward the United States. And obviously, that gives away the game. Now, it makes sense that Nikole Jones, as an American would concentrate on the United States of America. She's doing this for the *New York Times*, not the Rio de Janeiro Times. But the focus is myopic, and it is, in essence, anti-white. It has anti-white rage suffused throughout, and it prevents her from having a perspective or sense of proportion with respect to slavery.

I know that there are a number of people who think that any discourse related to slavery shouldn't have any kind of perspective, that it is a unique evil, and that you should recoil from it. There's no middle ground. I get that from an emotional perspective. But that's not a scholarly perspective. It's not an intelligent perspective. And it doesn't inform where we are as a society today and where we should be going.

So, you know, slavery, I think Peter was referencing it earlier on as an anthropologist, slavery was prevalent in most of the world for millennia. It wasn't unique to the United States of America. In fact, what became the United States of America was, frankly, a little bit late to the game. It was common in the Western Hemisphere, it predated the arrival of Europeans, to say nothing of slavery in Europe, in the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire. And despite the numerous cruelties of chattel slavery, the African population here in the United States somehow grew dramatically from natural increases.

As I mentioned, Hannah Nikole Jones says that nearly 400,000 slaves were imported to the colonies and into what became the infant United States. And think about those numbers because it says something about their own calculations. And again, this is not to diminish the horrors of slavery or to excuse anything. This is a matter of perspective. Perspective is important no matter what horrors we may be talking about, because we want to get it accurately because it informs the manner in which we deal with these similar matters now and in the future. If we get it wrong, we're gonna get everything wrong, or much wrong.

So 400,000 are imported. By the time of the 1860 census, however, there were almost 4 million slaves in the United States, and nearly half a million free blacks. So the injustice and cruelty of slavery didn't extinguish the African American population. But if the African American population, while you can't say thrive is the wrong word necessarily, but it grew significantly even during the antebellum period. It describes a population that grew from 400,000 to four to five million.

As Herbert Klein and Ben Vincent note in *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, the life expectancy of slaves mirrored the life expectancy of

the free population among whom they lived. Now, when they say mirrored, I took a look at this and mirror may be, it's not a precise word, but what it means is that the range of life expectancy wasn't markedly different according to them. They write, quote:

Although the contemporaries and later commentators have speculated endlessly about the life expectancy of slaves, it is apparent that it was not that different from that of the free populations in the societies in which they lived. The average life expectancy of native born Latin American slaves was in the low 20s. This contrasts with a U.S. slave life expectancy rate in the mid 30s. But in both cases, the slave rates reflected local free population rates, with free Latin Americans having a lower life expectancy than did free North Americans. The life expectancy of U.S. whites in 1850 was 40 years, whereas the total slave and free Brazilian population in 1872 had a life expectancy of 27 years. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that slaves were almost exclusively a working class population. Though their sanitation and housing in rural areas was probably better than those of the average subsistence free farm family, their food consumption was probably little better than that of the poorest elements of society. There's little doubt they are at the worst levels in every society in which they lived.

Now, why do I mention this demographic information that sounds callous and harsh in many respects? Again, facts are facts. Facts don't become non facts simply because they are bracing or harsh, but it's merely to provide some perspective. Throughout her essay, Jones uses overwrought, inflammatory language to describe slavery. Again, a horrific institution. But she even manages to go beyond that or the 1619 Project even goes beyond that and tends to distort things. It could make a much greater impact if it stayed within the confines of accuracy and

the truth. But she tends to portray American history as a long struggle between racist, oppressive whites and valiant, noble blacks. That's how everyone's characterized, and that's not how human beings behave.

She writes, for example, quote, "They," meaning slaves "could be worked to death and often were to produce the highest profits for the white people who owned them." Now, I have no doubt that that occasionally occurs. And it did occur and there was no doubt that this was cruel, even if there were no physical cruelty visited upon slaves in any particular instance. But working a slave, an asset, to death happened, but not necessarily the best way to make a buck. Given that the life expectancies of slaves was similar to those of free whites, either being worked to death was uncommon, or everyone, black and white, was being worked to death at the time. There was probably a little bit of both.

Were any one of us transported to 1850, I'm sure we would think that, boy, these conditions are pretty horrific. Hannah-Jones also criticizes the framers of the Constitution, for, among other things, not outlawing importation of slaves for twenty years and for allowing Congress to mobilize troops to put down slave revolts. Now, rather than seeing the, at least improvements or positive trends that the framers set a date certain for ending the slave trade, she blames them for not ending it immediately, as I said a little bit earlier.

Now historian Gordon Wood said, and I quote, "The first anti-slavery meeting in the history of the world takes place in Philadelphia, in 1775." Human beings are complex things. Thirteen years after that meeting, the new Americans agreed to end the import of slaves in 1808. And it'd be nineteen years before Britain decided to end her involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, less than the British slave

trade, months before the American slave trade ended. Gordon Wood also notes that during the Revolution and framing in the Constitution, many people thought that slavery was on its last legs and ending the transatlantic slave trade would put slavery on the road to extinction. Well, we know they were wrong, but predictions are tough things.

You know, back in the 1990s, we all thought that the economic development of China would cause it to abandon its totalitarianism, its communism, and embrace democracy. But we were wrong about that. It's also remarkable that the 1619 Project promotes or believes that it was illegitimate to grant Congress the power to quell slave revolts. Okay, get that. All right. The lone successful slave revolt, as we all know, or at least there were perhaps two, but the famous one was the Nat Turner rebellion. And it was pretty, pretty bloody, no doubt about it. Turner's followers, quote, "launched a campaign of total annihilation, murdering Travis's owner and his family in their sleep, and then setting forth on a bloody march toward Jerusalem. In two days and nights about sixty white people were ruthlessly slain." End quote.

On the other hand, maybe it makes sense that Hannah-Jones said that it would be an honor for the riots that are currently destroying many of our cities across the country be known as the 1619 riots. No, it wouldn't be an honor. I wouldn't be an honor for any riots. It was bad to quell slave revolts because the institution of slavery should have been abandoned earlier, in a perfect world, in a world in a peaceful fashion. But saying that in 2020, after we have a black president, black CEOs, lawful discrimination has been outlawed for 60 years; there are discrete instances of racism and discrimination, no doubt, but this country has done incredible progress in eliminating vestiges of discrimination. To say that we should call this the 1619 riots, I'm just going to reserve comment on that. Let me just say that I think when

you hear commentators and politicians throughout the land speak favorably about these riots, that says a lot about them, and says absolutely nothing about the history of this country.

What the proponents of 1619 seem to fail to grasp is that you can both oppose slavery and racial injustice, and also hope not to have your property destroyed or be murdered in your bed such as those individuals during the Nat Turner rebellion. But let's return to some of the errors and omissions in the 1619 Project and the Jones essay.

She writes that the Supreme Court enshrined white supremacy in law in the Dred Scott decision. I know many of you are intimately familiar with the Dred Scott decision. As a member of the Civil Rights Commission, obviously, this is something that I've looked at for a long, long time back when I was a student, but even today. So this is what they write about the Dred Scott decision, quote:

This belief that Black people were not merely enslaved, but were a slave race, became the root of the endemic racism that we still cannot purge from this nation to this day. If Black people could not ever be citizens, if they were cast apart from all humans, then they did not require the rights bestowed by the Constitution, and the "We" in the "We the People" was not a lie.

A historian from Oxford, Carwardine said, "It is not the case that all white Americans thought that African Americans were excluded." And all you have to do is just have a glancing familiarity with the history of that period. He says, quote, "What's really striking," addressing this notion, "however, is what Lincoln positively demands for blacks at this time, the 19, or the 1850s election. He embraces them with the Declaration of Independence, his proposition that all men are created equal." By all men he means

regardless of color. And that's where he gets into a tussle with Douglas. Douglas insists that the Declaration of Independence was never intended to apply to black people. And Lincoln is emphatic that it does. "So for me," this is Carwardine, "it's what Lincoln claims for black people that is striking and not what he says he will deny them."

So then, the essay [Nikole Hannah Jones' essay] then skips from 1857 when Dred Scott is handed down to 1862. And in so doing, they lead the reader of the essay to believe that the Dred Scott decision reflected the consensus of white Americans at the time, again, in 1862. And you'd never guess from her essay that the decision ignited a public firestorm. It wasn't simply accepted as given. The firestorm was obviously among free white Americans. And Lincoln denounced the decision, expansion of slavery to the territories, and slavery itself in his famous House Divided speech. Lincoln denounced Douglas saying, quote, "he has done all in his power to reduce the whole question of slavery to one of a mere property right." By implication, Lincoln himself believed that the question of slavery was more than mere right of property.

As an avowed opponent of slavery, Lincoln was elected to the presidency two years later. If Dred Scott represented the consensus of white Americans at the time, it's likely he wouldn't be elected. As Lincoln said earlier in the House Divided speech, quote:

We're now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object and confident premise, putting an end to slavery, agitation, and the operation of that policy that agitation is not only not ceased, but is constantly augmented. My opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure

permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful, in all states, old as well as new, North, as well as South.

Now, the 1619 Project skips over all of this. Skips over that five year interval of increasing public conflict over slavery that culminated in the Civil War. And they focus on 1862 just in time for the meeting between Lincoln and black leaders, in which he proposed, and this is a significant part of 1619 Project essay, he proposed that African Americans emigrate to Africa under a colonization plan. That is one of, purportedly Lincoln's original sins.

But again, Carwardine said, "In this exchange with black leaders, it should be seen in the context in which it took place." Again, context is very important. We can't measure things properly from the standpoint of 2020 sensibilities, well, nobody wants to mention anything or measure anything from 2020 because we want to get out of here as soon as possible. But in 1862, the union's fortunes were bleak and Lincoln himself was under a lot of strain at the time.

Carwardine said, "Lincoln's message to them has to be seen also in the context of the daunting prospective challenge of embracing four million slaves fully into the American polity." It's noteworthy that when Lincoln proposed a constitutional amendment that would gradually emancipate slaves and compensate slave owners, while also resettling former slaves in Africa, that the amendment didn't go anywhere. "Cornelius Cole, who took office as Representative from California on March 4, 1863, recollected more

accurately that Lincoln's amendment proposal, 'recognized the ownership of the master to a slave.'" And because many members of Congress could not agree with him on this, it, "received no consideration by Congress."

Again, that's fully at odds with what the 1619 Project contends is almost a universal acceptance of slavery and resistance to the abolishment thereof. And somehow that the Dred Scott decision reflected the consensus of Americans, free Americans, at the time. Again, there are manifold, multiple distortions of history that all go one way. That's important, I think, that we see that where there's emphasis, where there is a lack of emphasis, where there is distortion, where there are mistakes, all of them within the essay, all of them within the confines of the 1619 Project, seem to go only in one direction. And it's an anti-American direction. And the subtext also is an anti-white narrative. That's not history. That's propaganda. And it's malignant propaganda.

We have not had this kind of narrative as prominently featured as it is now in our schools, in media, in all forms of media, whether it be entertainment media, or otherwise. We haven't had it in this perspective, in a long, long time. And I think that even though we've had some version of this pursuant to critical race theory for at least last 30 plus years, it hasn't been this overt, this adamant, and that presents significant challenges.

So let's think about this for a minute. Lincoln proposed what might be a rambling and ill-considered proposal to attempt to end the war, gradually free the slaves and tackle the, quote, "race problem" that loomed in the public mind at the time. And his fellow Republicans were committed to the belief that slaves must be freed immediately. A person can have property that they were unwilling to seriously consider Lincoln's proposal, even if it might have

saved hundreds of thousands of white lives in a civil war. Again, this puts into considerable doubt, and I'm using that term charitably, the premise of the 1619 Project, which maintains that not only was slavery an inarguable wrong, but everyone who was white in America, or at least a large number of whites in America, embraced that wrong for their own benefit, and had no compunction about it and wanted to seek to contain and receive those benefits over a long term.

I think I've been rambling for quite some time now. And I do have to get to my emergency. I just want to say thanks again for having me. I think the 1619 Project, along with more broadly critical race theory is one of the most significant attempts to propagandize history that we have seen in at least my lifetime. And it's been lurking in the weeds for a while. You know, we've seen some elements of it, but now we have it full throated, and it's being shoved down our throats with the willing assistance of many in the academy, and definitely many in the media, and politicians who find that it is politically useful.

I would just simply close by saying, then urging, everybody, and I know I'm speaking to or preaching to the choir here, to say that every opportunity that we have without being pejorative about it, although I acknowledge that I've done so in this presentation to some extent because I'm that inflamed by this, but we need to resist this as strongly as we possibly can. Because this goes to undermining the very notion of what it means to be American, and this has untold effects for the future.

Peter, thanks very much for having me.

Peter Wood

Thank you, Peter, for being here. And for a terrific talk. I think you've set the table for this whole week

to come. I don't want to hold you back from the fires or the emergencies that you're about to deal with. We're so fortunate to have you here to lead off the conference. So my gratitude and that of our listeners.

Peter Kirsanow

Thanks, Peter, and I hope to rejoin at some point in the week.

Peter Wood

Good. For those of you who are watching, remember that at 3pm today, Eastern Time, we have the panel on Absences from the 1619 Project's History that will be moderated by Tom Lindsay, distinguished Senior Fellow of Higher Education and Constitutional Studies at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. The panelists are John Stauffer, Professor of English, American Studies, and African American Studies at Harvard, speaking on the white abolitionists tradition; and Diana Schaub, Professor of Political Science at Loyola University, Maryland, talking about Frederick Douglass. I look forward to seeing you back at three.

Absences from the 1619 Project's History

Diana Schaub, John Stauffer, Tom Lindsay

Tom Lindsay

Good afternoon. I'm Tom Lindsay. And I'm very happy to get the chance to moderate a very interesting panel as we examine the 1619 Project. We will discuss both what the 1619 Project includes and what it does not include. Our experts that will be speaking this afternoon are first Professor Diana Schaub, who is a Professor of Political Science at Loyola University in Maryland. She's an authority on Frederick Douglass. And then we also have... he's not on screen now. But we also are expecting Professor John Stauffer to come and he's a professor of English, American Studies, and African American Studies at Harvard University. He's also an authority on the white abolitionist tradition.

Now the procedure that we're following this afternoon is this: We have extracted some statements from the 1619 Project that we're going to ask our two experts to respond to, beginning with you, Professor Schaub. The prompt that you've been asked to respond to is the following. The 1619 Project states this, "The truth is that as much democracy as this nation has today, it has been borne on the backs of black resistance." Professor Schaub?

Diana Schaub

I think I'll begin controversially by starting with Thomas Jefferson. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson expressed his fear that the institution of human bondage damaged both slaveholders and slaves. As he put it, "Permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other [half], transforms those into despots; and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the *amor patriae* of the other."

Nikole Hannah-Jones, author of the 1619 Project's lead essay, certainly agrees about the low morals of slaveholders. Indeed, according to her, it isn't just

slaveholders who were cruel and hypocritical. All white Americans, then and now, share in what she considers to be the racist DNA of the nation. Yet, interestingly, she disagrees with Jefferson about black patriotism. She points out that enslaved people from the first moments of freedom overwhelmingly regarded the United States as their country. Her essay is an attempt to explain and validate this patriotism.

She begins with the story of her father, who always prominently flew an American flag. This was an act that her younger self found incomprehensible. What could account for his unshakable sense of belonging? After all, her father had been born in the "apartheid state" of Mississippi and suffered life-sapping insults, even after relocating north. The answer she arrives at is that blacks do most emphatically belong. According to her account of history, African Americans are responsible for the great wealth of the nation, responsible for whatever measure of true democracy it has managed to achieve, and, for good measure, responsible also for the only original aspects of American culture. Her patriotism would, I think, have to be called chauvinistic.

This conference will be highlighting the 1619 Project's many misrepresentations of American history, its appalling errors both of omission and commission. However, as we engage in that critique, we should keep in mind the patriotic framing of the lead essay. Hannah-Jones is asking the question that has always been the starting point of black political thought: What country have I?

The question was first formulated by Frederick Douglass in an 1847 speech to the American Anti-Slavery Society. His answer at that time was that he had no country, since the political and religious institutions did not acknowledge him as a man, instead seeing him only as a chattel and, in his case,

an escaped chattel. As a fugitive from slavery, whose three million brethren were still "groaning beneath the iron rod of the worst despotism that could be devised," Douglass began from a position of radical alienation. Moreover, after his flight north from Maryland to Massachusetts, he joined up with the Garrisonian abolitionists and was persuaded to adopt their hatred of the U.S. Constitution.

For the first decade of his career, from 1841 to 1851, Douglass called for the overthrow of the government, desiring to see, "its Constitution shivered in a thousand fragments, rather than this foul curse should continue." While always remaining an agitator of the first order, Douglass eventually rethought his revolutionary stance. Through assiduous study of the Constitution and the rules of textual interpretation, Douglass came to reject the Garrisonian's pro-slavery reading of the Constitution. As a result of that seismic shift in his understanding of the national charter, he embraced a more positive view of the founding generation and its achievements, as well as a new view of how he and his people fit into the American story.

As we learn from Douglass's evolving thought, the remedy for bad history is more history, history that disdains the temptations of ideology and chauvinism. Douglass's first great speech after this transformation is entitled, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" Clearly, he's still raising uncomfortable questions, and still analyzing things from the perspective of the slave. But the speech itself articulates a profound and complexly balanced patriotism. To my mind, Frederick Douglass stands as the model for how to apportion and combine praise and blame when assessing the American record on race.

Revealingly, Hannah-Jones does not mention Douglass, does not once mention Frederick Douglass, although she does quote from his contemporary

Martin Delany, as well as from her favorite radical W.E.B. Du Bois. It's perhaps worth noting that both Delany and Du Bois are associated with black nationalism and pan-Africanism. And each would eventually forsake residence in the United States, permanently in Du Bois's case, and for many years in Delany's. These intellectual antecedents illustrate, I think, how unsustainable Hannah-Jones's current position is. Not only is her account seriously at odds with the facts, but it's psychologically and politically untenable. It's hard to square the alienation of black nationalism with a strong assertion of American patriotism. So what she ends up with is a pretty extreme version of black chauvinism, as if African Americans have been the only good and decent citizens, and as if Protest, with a capital P, is the only acceptable form of political action.

Now, of course, many black thinkers before her have described the special relationship of blacks to America. Douglass declared that "the destiny of the nation has the Negro for its pivot." Du Bois followed suit, asserting that "there are today no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes." Hannah-Jones takes such statements much further, making blacks the sole beacon of hope in this terrible white world. For her, celebration of the black contribution requires denigrating or at least overlooking the contribution of others. Yet, surely, generations of free laborers of other races and ethnicities contributed something to the wealth of the nation. And on the political side, while it might be true that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," it is also true that, practically speaking, the condition for the eventual liberty of all was the prior liberty of some. As they tell you on the airplane when the oxygen masks descend, "secure your own mask before assisting others." Without the liberty the colonists sought for themselves, there would have been no nation for the 1619 Project to misrepresent.

Which brings us back to Douglass's Fourth of July address. In this speech, Douglass most assuredly damns elements of the nation's conduct, but he never damns America, never says anything remotely like Hannah-Jones's opening salvo: "Our founding ideals of liberty and equality were false when they were written." By the way, that statement, for all its seeming boldness, is weirdly imprecise. If all she means is that the ideals, though worthy, were unrealized, no one would disagree, especially not the American revolutionaries who were hazarding life, fortune, and sacred honor to begin the arduous process of turning ideals into reality. If, however, she means, as she later hints, that the drafters of the document did not include blacks within the category of human beings endowed by their Creator with natural rights, then I believe she is fundamentally wrong and that the universalism of their intentions can be proved against her.

Certainly, Douglass would disagree with today's knee jerk assumption that the founders restricted "all men" to just a few men, or a few categories of men, such as those who were white, male, and property owning like themselves. Douglass spends the opening third of his long speech celebrating the revolution. He calls the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence "saving principles." Further, he believes that the signers understood the revolutionary trajectory of their principles. "With them," he says, "nothing was *settled* that was not right. With them, justice, liberty, and humanity were *final*, not slavery and oppression." Douglass admits that, "the point from which I am compelled to view the founders is not, certainly, the most favorable." Nonetheless, he insists, "I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen, patriots, and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with you to honor their memory."

Douglass's respect for the fathers of the Republic, is, however, expressed from a certain distance, a distance felt most poignantly in his repeated references to your fathers, your national independence, your political freedom, your great deliverance, your national life, and your national poetry and eloquence. This fourth of July, 1852, is not his, or at least his claim to the date is not admitted by those whom he nonetheless addresses as "fellow citizens." It is these fellow citizens, the sons of the Fathers, whom Douglass disdains for betraying the promise of the revolution. Douglass compares the Americans of his day to the children of Jacob, who boasted: "we have Abraham to our father," when they had long lost Abraham's faith and spirit."

As he shifts to the great middle of his speech, which is concerned solely with the deficiencies of that present, Douglass delivers a most remarkable transition sentence: "I leave therefore, the great deeds of your fathers to other gentlemen, whose claim to have been regularly descended will be less likely to be disputed than mine!" With suggestive though still decorous irony, Douglass, whose father was assumed to be his white master, lets the audience know that he too is connected by blood to the Fathers. Although not "regularly descended," since slave offspring were not legally acknowledged, Douglass hints that he, as the natural son, is closer to the spirit of that revolutionary generation than the degraded regular sons are.

The central section of the Fourth of July speech is a searing critique of slavery and its institutional supports, including the churches. Douglass describes how organized religion, false to its authentic mission, has made itself "the bulwark of American slavery." Even at his most fiery, Douglass is fair. Although vowing to "use the severest language" he can command, he also promises "that not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slave-

holder, shall not confess to be right and just."

Throughout, he castigates "the great sin and shame of America," rather than America itself. His special target is the inconsistency and hypocrisy of the nation. The oft-quoted last paragraph of the central section captures the flavor. Let me just read a couple of sentences from that.

The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad: it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing and a byword to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your *Union*.

Douglass's polemic works by summoning the present generation to be true to the nation's "saving principles." This is, I think, a far cry from the contemporary claim that America was founded upon white supremacy and nothing but white supremacy.

Just as Frederick Douglass and Hannah-Jones disagree about the significance of 1776, they disagree about the meaning of 1787. Douglass transitions to the third and final section of his address by acknowledging that there are those who insist that property in man is "guaranteed and sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States." He had once been one of that company. But by 1852, Douglass praises the Constitution, praises it as the best weapon in the anti-slavery arsenal. To wield it effectively, however, required that it be freed from the corrosive distortions of the slaveholders' interpretation. Douglass pleads with his audience:

Fellow citizens! There is no matter in respect to which the people of the North have allowed them-

selves to be so ruinously imposed upon as that of the pro-slavery character of the Constitution. In that instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but interpreted, as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a glorious liberty document.

Douglass's anti-slavery reading of the Constitution is most fully on display in his masterful 1860 speech in Scotland. Paying strict attention to the words themselves, Douglass points out that slavery nowhere received federal authorization. The word itself was absent from the document. Even in those few clauses that were traditionally understood to have application to slavery, those referred to are always called "Persons," and their situation (as in their "Importation") is a function purely of municipal or state law, not federal law.

In addition to stressing a plain and common sense construal of the language, Douglass also focuses on the intention of the drafters, as it could be discerned from the text, supplemented by contemporaneous accounts, such as Madison's *Notes* from the Constitutional Convention.

Douglass argues, for instance, that providing for future congressional action against the international slave trade revealed the drafters' anti-slavery intentions. Although it was true that the trade was given a twenty year stay of execution (since Congress was forbidden to act until 1808) nonetheless, the framers readied the axe to fall. Moreover, they did so in the sincere belief that the institution itself would die if this main artery were cut.

Finally, Douglass emphasizes the governing force of the Preamble as the spirit that should guide the interpretation of each article, section, and clause. He sees no reason to believe that persons of his complexion were excluded from "We the People." As he points out in another speech, the *Dred Scott* speech, at

the time of the ratification of the Constitution, free black men exercised the franchise in nearly all of the states. They were part of "We the People," not just prospectively, but actually and actively, as citizens and voters. Today's progressives, in order to pursue their vendetta against the past, have perversely joined the southern slave-ocrats and their northern dupes in grossly misconstruing the character of the Constitution

To the radicals of his day who made that same mistake, Douglass was unsparing: "How dare any man who pretends to be a friend of the Negro, thus gratuitously concede away what the Negro has a right to claim under the Constitution?" I suspect he would repeat his rebuke today.

What good can come from arguing, as Hannah-Jones does, that there is a straight line from the Constitution of 1787 to the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857? One would have no sense from reading her essay that Taney's opinion in the case was widely regarded as a travesty of justice. Douglass labeled it "this judicial incarnation of wolfishness." And it wasn't just abolitionists who were outraged. The platform of the Republican Party called for *Dred Scott* to be overruled.

Oblivious to this resistance in the free states, Hannah-Jones asserts that, "the Supreme Court enshrined" racist thinking. While the decision certainly was a clear example of racism in high places, the court did not manage to enshrine such views. Quite the opposite. The *Dred Scott* case was one of the prime catalysts of the Civil War. Frederick Douglass, who was astute in discerning silver linings, took heart from the atrocious decision, believing correctly that *Dred Scott* would arouse "the National Conscience."

In keeping with his faith in the future, the great abolitionist orator ended most of his speeches on an uplifting note. This is especially true of the Fourth of

July speech. Douglass's hopefulness is well sourced, for it is grounded in the "saving principles" of the Declaration and that "glorious liberty document," the U.S. Constitution. These are the twin charters, the praise of which bookends his criticism of American practices.

Hannah-Jones, let it be said, also ends on a hopeful note. She tells the affecting story of a school assignment that required her to research the land of her ancestors, and submit a drawing of its flag. Meant to celebrate America as a nation of immigrants, the project put the two black students in the class in an awkward position. At a loss, she picked at random an African country. In hindsight, she wishes she had claimed the American flag as her own true heritage. Her patriotic impulse is right. But she has only half the story, her half, about the contribution, the real contribution of black people to the building of the nation, both materially and morally.

Frederick Douglass could help her, and all Americans, see that their belonging could be much more fully rounded. What is needed is a project to reclaim the Declaration and the Constitution, to rescue the Founders from their unfair detractors, and to remember all of those in subsequent generations, white and black, who struggled, often together, to bring the nation to its best self.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Professor Schaub. That was a very illuminating presentation. And I think you mentioned at the beginning of your presentation that Jones doesn't give much attention, if any, to Frederick Douglass and we see perhaps one reason why, because Douglass certainly contradicts the account that the *New York Times* 1619 Project wants to present.

Thank you.

Next, we will go to Professor John Stauffer. Pro-

fessor Stauffer, thank you for attending. And let me tell the audience a little bit about you, sir. You're a professor of English, American Studies, and African American Studies at Harvard University. You're an expert on the white abolitionist tradition.

The prompt that we've selected for you, Professor Stauffer, from the 1619 Project, reads as follows. "By the early 1800s, according to the legal historians Leland Ware, Robert Cottrol, and Raymond T. Diamond, white Americans, whether they engaged in slavery or not, 'had a considerable psychological as well as economic investment in the doctrine of black inferiority.' While liberty was the inalienable right of the people who would be considered white, enslavement and subjugation became the natural station of people who had any discernible drop of black blood. The Supreme Court enshrined this thinking in the law in its 1857 Dred Scott decision, ruling that black people, whether enslaved or free, came from a slave race."

Prof. John Stauffer

So that's a gross overgeneralization. I think it's important to pick it apart, both chronologically and geographically. I'll begin by saying that the abolition movement—to be a scholar of abolitionism means you have to be a scholar of both black and white abolitionists. It was an integrated movement from the beginning. Blacks were the first abolitionists, former slaves who—as one of the defining aspects of slavery is that one is denied a voice, a public voice—now having that public voice, to be able to disseminate it, and to speak firsthand about the sins or crimes of slavery, what can mobilize a group of people.

One of the big successes that flows from the founding of the country is the emancipation of slavery in the northern states, which was all gradual, but a large

success. And in fact, the founding reflected the degree to which slavery was so widespread in Western culture. The Vermont Constitution was the first constitution in world history to abolish slavery. That's how new or comparatively new the idea of anti-slavery was. And Vermont had very few blacks, but blacks were very much part of the anti-slavery movement. In general, the eastern states, both in Vermont and Massachusetts, of the Northeast states, Massachusetts, for example, provided unrestricted suffrage for African Americans from shortly after the revolution through the antebellum period. And so there were, in effect, by the 1850s, suffrage restrictions on the Irish because they were seen as more of a threat. They were seen as a separate race. There were very few blacks in Massachusetts, less than 1%. But they did have unrestricted suffrage. There were a handful of states that provided that.

The states that were the most racist, and racism was profound, were the Midwestern states, in part because Midwestern states were settled and became states primarily because of poor white Southerners who did not want to become workers on a plantation, but to have their own farms instead, but as Southerners had these... were much more racist in their views.

So Illinois, Indiana, the Lincoln state of Illinois, there were essentially what have been known as sundown laws where blacks could not be citizens in the state by law. Although in Lincoln's Illinois, there were a small percentage, but there were still blacks who lived there. Same with Indiana. Indiana was a racist state, more racist. And some states like Ohio, northern Ohio was very different from southern Ohio. Northern Ohio was a hotbed of abolitionism. And so it's important on exactly where you move.

A major point that not just scholars of the United States but of the world history of slavery and of race

make is that as the number of free blacks increase, that's when racism increases. And as I've suggested, when in those states, like Massachusetts, which once prided itself on freedom saw, I mean, according to the census, Massachusetts was the first state that had no slaves. Because the first emancipation movements were gradual emancipation movements... there were very few blacks in the states in Massachusetts, and so the blacks were able to enjoy unrestricted suffrage. But as northern states emancipated slaves and free blacks became a larger part of the population, that's when racism grew, particularly in those areas where whites saw them as a threat. And it's why in the midwestern states they were perceived as much more of a threat, and they had few legal rights.

It's important to remember that over 90% of African Americans lived in the South. And in fact, most free blacks, the majority, there were more free blacks living in the slave states than there were in the free states primarily because they had family members, and they were unwilling to leave family members who were slaves. So the number of free blacks was comparatively very small, but they had a disproportionately huge role in disseminating the abolition movement, and the voice, and the advocacy for universal freedom, the efforts to try to force Americans in general to live up to the ideals of freedom and equality in the Declaration. That was profound.

And in fact, one of the differences ... beginning in the late 1820s the very definition of an abolitionist changed. From the adoption of the Constitution, or from the revolutionary period until the 1820s, an abolitionist was one who simply advocated an end to slavery. Not necessarily immediately, but an end to slavery. Imagined the world, wanted the good society, a world without slavery. And as the free black population grew and free blacks started to insist upon much more immediate emancipation because by 1804, the last northern state had freed slaves. And

so the emancipation movement stalled in the 1820s.

By the 1820s, African Americans really came to lead the abolition movement and emphasize the importance of quickness, of we can't wait forever. And so by the time of David Walker's appeal in 1829, and then William Lloyd Garrison's and the first black newspaper *Freedom's Journal*, that was an inspiration for Garrison's *Liberator*, and then other abolitionist newspapers. The definition of an abolitionist was someone who advocated an end to slavery as swiftly as possible, and in theory, racial equality. Now, a number of whites were unable to realize that ideal of racial equality, but what's significant about the abolition movement is they grappled with it, they understood the importance of equality for all people, equal rights under the law. In fact, the abolition movement, beginning in the 1830s, is when the first iteration or dissemination of human rights and civil rights were developed by the abolitionists, black and white abolitionists. And they meant by human rights what human rights came to be understood as in 1948 and beyond, is this understanding of equality before the law for everyone. And so not just freedom, but equal rights and protections. And abolitionists were the first group to really disseminate the idea, both black and white. And whether it's Frederick Douglass or James McCune Smith or David Walker, they all recognized the power of racism and of race, both blacks and whites did.

And in fact, Frederick Douglass's second autobiography, "My Bondage and My Freedom," it's the first slave narrative to differentiate between my life as a slave and my life as a free man. Why does he talk about his life as a free man? Because he wants to expose racism. That, and to highlight the degree to which racism and slavery become twinned. Racism helps justify slavery. It provides slave owners a way of not feeling guilty about dehumanizing another human being. You could say that racism in one sense

is a way of exorcising one's guilt about trying to de-humanize another human being. And that increases with the rise and the voice, the public voice, of African Americans who are insisting upon their freedom and their equal rights.

And so by 1857, Taney's Dred Scott decision has been mentioned, more than once. It was actually a huge spur to abolitionists and anti-slavery sentiment. By the 1830s, the abolitionists were people who advocated for a swift end of slavery and racial equality. The largest group of Northerners called themselves anti-slavery advocates, and anti-slavery advocates recognized that slavery is a sin, slavery is wrong, it needs to be abolished. But it was gradual, and most anti-slavery-advocates did not advocate racial equality.

Lincoln is a very good example. He was willing to, I mean, when in his debates with Stephen Douglas, Stephen Douglas is a profound race biter. But had Lincoln or especially any politician in Illinois, in Indiana, if you wanted to get elected and you champion racial equality, there's no way you're going to get elected. There's no way. So you're being pragmatic. You're being pragmatic as a politician.

But what's most significant, from the 1930s—really for almost all of the 20th century until just a few years ago—people had argued that the abolitionists and the anti-slavery advocates were at odds—they didn't work together. And that's simply not true. The abolitionists, even though they recognized that the Free Soil Party, that the Republican Party did not have racial equality as its foundation, their vision of ending slavery was very broad, but anti-slavery was central to their platform. Douglass stumped for numerous Republican candidates, other black and white abolitionists also stumped for Republican candidates, even when Douglass himself is a member, is a founding member of the radical abolition

party, or the National Liberty Party, which is a radical wing of, or comes out of the Liberty party.

So in a sense, with these radical third parties, they understand part of their mission is to work with a mainstream party, in this case, the Republican Party, to try to push it to a more progressive position. And the degree to which radicals and moderates, radicals and liberals, work together, was profound, and it's how social change occurs.

Now, there's a long debate on protest and social change. And a number of scholars say social change only occurs because of radicals at the margins. That's not true. Radicals at the margin, especially in a democracy, have to be able to influence and change the minds of the policymakers. It's this messy but rich collaboration between abolitionists and anti-slavery advocates that then leads to the rise of the Republican Party, and the Republican Party was, in my view, a truly revolutionary party. It's the first national party that comes out of the Free Soil Party. A national party whose central platform is that slavery is an evil at a time in which the wealthiest, most powerful Americans were Southern planters.

In fact, Charles Sumner in the 1850 census did an analysis of the census and recognized that 0.4% of the population were by far the wealthiest Americans, it was 0.4% of the population who owned 10 or more slaves. And if you owned 10 slaves in 1850, you were the equivalent of a multimillionaire today. And so that's where the term slave power came from. It was an oligarchy of a small handful of immensely wealthy, elite, slave-owning Southerners who were trying to hijack the nation and spread slavery throughout the country. For most of the 20th century people thought that the idea that slave power was seen as this, a conspiracy, it was not based in fact, that it reflected these irrational fears of Northern anti-slavery people and abolitionists, which is not true. I mean, South-

erners did control, they had a disproportionate control over the government. And it's what Douglass ... it's what both anti-slavery advocates and the Republican Party really were fighting against. They were fighting against that [disproportionate political influence].

And Southerners made it very clear that if an anti-slavery politician were elected president, they'd be out, they would leave the country. Their loyalty to slavery was far greater than their loyalty to a nation, which is exactly what happened. The day after Lincoln was elected in 1860, South Carolina announces its Secession Convention. The day after. By the time Lincoln delivers his inaugural address, seven states had already seceded and the Confederacy had already been formed.

So the large takeaway is, it's impossible to think, to define the white abolition movement without discussing the black abolitionists. They worked together, they collaborated. By 1830, the very term abolitionist meant something different than what it had meant in the first successful emancipation movement, where these abolitionists who were not, were not immediatists, were successfully able to eliminate slavery in the northern states.

Without that, and that's one of the overlooked aspects of the abolition movement, the huge success of the emancipation of the northern states, at a time in which slavery is becoming more and more profitable, especially—I mean, the cotton gin was invented, and I think it was before 1800.¹ By the 1820s, cotton was hugely profitable. By 1850, cotton, the United States produced over a third of, or maybe over a half of, the world's cotton supply. They made money hand over fist, and the wealthiest Americans were Southerners.

And so those opposed to slavery worked together to

create multiple political organizations. Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society has been often criticized because they interpreted the Constitution as a pro-slavery document. And so in a sense, they saw themselves as standing outside the framework of the federal government. But that was a strategy, that was a technique as a way to raise consciousness and really to pressure people to take seriously the idea of how horrible slavery was, which explains why as soon as civil war broke out, as soon as the Southerners bombed Fort Sumter and started the Civil War, Garrison becomes whole hog in support of Lincoln's Republican Party. Same with every other American anti-slavery advocate. It's like okay, now we don't need the pro-slavery Constitution. Now everyone recognizes that the Constitution is on our side, we'll jettison a useless doctrine. And that's it. You know, essentially, it's a sign of good activists: you use any tool that you can find to help you achieve your aim.

And Garrison in one sense is right when acknowledging the pro-slavery nature of the Constitution, because Southerners had control of the country. By the 1850s, you know, a lot of Southerners wanted to rewrite the Declaration of Independence. You know, including Stephen Douglas. He's an Illinoisan and so it's important to recognize the strategy, rather than the philosophy, which explains why someone like Garrison, like Phillips, like all the other American anti-slavery advocates, as soon as Southerners bombed Fort Sumter, they are completely on board with the United States and the Republican Party.

And the other thing I would say is that there were periods the abolition movement required complete cooperation among the participants, because the abolitionists themselves were a tiny group, it's less than 1% of the population. Anti-slavery advocates increased, arguably after the fugitive slave law of 1850. And especially after the Kansas-Nebraska Act, most northerners became anti-slavery, hence the rise

of the Republican Party, which was founded immediately after the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

John C. Fremont, the very first Republican presidential candidate, comes close to winning the election. I mean, that's stunning how many votes he gets for a brand new party. Which highlights the number of anti-slavery advocates there were in the North. In their letters, in their correspondence, they're very clear that Douglass and Garrett Smith and Garrison, even, who's still advocating dis-union, is working with, pressuring, wanting to pressure the Republican Party to be more progressive, and recognizing the importance of it. And it's true with any effective radical party; since the number of party members in a democracy is tiny, you're not going to get elected. But you can encourage or pressure the mainstream party to be more focused or progressive in terms of the goals that you want.

And hence, Douglass taking time out of his very busy schedule. I mean, he was one of the highest paid lecturers at a time in the golden age of oratory. When many writers made their money as lecturers, he took time out to stump for Republican candidates, to stump for others, because he recognized although they might be racist, and although their vision of ending slavery was very gradual, the Republican Party helped him help them. And that's been true with successful protest movements in general: radicals and moderates work together to achieve change that's less than what the radicals hope, and in some cases, more than what the moderates really want.

So in that sense, and I can end here, is the abolition movement was one of the first really great successful, which despite its limitations—I can talk later about the limitations as reflected, for example, in the truly revolutionary Reconstruction amendments—as Akhil Amar and virtually every other legal scholar has

pointed out, radically transformed the Constitution. Equality enters into the Constitution with the 14th Amendment. It's referred to in the Declaration, but not the Constitution till the 14th Amendment. And they're problematic. But that still makes the civil rights movement of the 20th century possible.

And so the upshot is that despite the limitations, the abolition movement was a profound success. Without it, I should just say Southerners felt themselves to be the true conservatives. If you were a white southerner who grew up on a plantation, you were born in 1820, by 1850, you had assumed that slavery was a natural condition, and by 1850, everywhere, the rest of the world is abolishing slavery. By 1850, the United States was the largest slave society on earth. And then by 1850, the only other slave communities or slave societies in Western culture left were Brazil, Dutch Guiana, and Cuba, and the United States had far more slaves. So the Southerners saw this wave of emancipation sweeping over the New World, and they dug in their heels firmer and firmer and became more aggressive. Which is why they sought to take over some of Central America for slavery, why they waged war against Mexico, because they wanted it to expand, they wanted to reverse this wave of emancipation, and expand slavery back through and into Central America and acquire a greater empire in order to reverse this wave and become even wealthier and more powerful.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Professor Stauffer. Thank you, Professor Schaub. You know, after hearing you both so expertly dismantle the two planks that we took from the 1619 Project, let me ask the next question, the deeper question from both of you. And that's this: what are the origins of the current attacks on the Constitution and the American Republic? And then second, why should Americans care?

Prof. John Stauffer

So part of the origin of the Constitution is that when it was written and ratified and so on, commencing in 1787, northern states were beginning to abolish slavery. Certainly the delegates from Massachusetts were opposed to slavery. And in the Chesapeake slavery still existed, but the profitability of slavery had declined dramatically, because tobacco was the main crop, and they refused to rotate the soil. And so the tobacco crop was no longer as profitable.

A central framework for the Constitutional Convention was to create a document that all delegates could support, without exclusion. And the two, it was Georgia and South Carolina delegates, in which slavery was still hugely profitable and successful. They were disproportionately the ones that created a compromised Constitution. In fact, a couple scholars have indulged in a counterfactual and said, let's say the framers of the Constitution were willing to sacrifice delegates, sacrifice Georgia and South Carolina. Had they been willing to do that a Constitution could have been created that would have abolished slavery everywhere in 50 years.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you.

Diana Schaub

Yes, I wanted to weigh in on this question of where this current pro-slavery interpretation of the Constitution comes from. It seems to me in some way that Hannah-Jones is taking up the slaveholders' reading, the pro-slavery reading, of the Constitution. They construed those compromises in the Constitution as a kind of moral mandate to maintain slavery forever. And I guess I want to level a little bit more of a

criticism at the Garrisonian wing of the abolitionists for joining in on that pro-slavery interpretation of the Constitution and holding to it.

John Stauffer pointed out that they threw it overboard at the moment of Lincoln's election, or at the moment of secession. But, it's a real question why Garrison wasn't willing to jettison that pro-slavery reading of the Constitution earlier. You see Douglass working his way through this matter of constitutional interpretation and changing his mind about it, embracing an anti-slavery reading of the Constitution. He did so both for purposes of greater political realism, shifting from being a revolutionary to being a reformer, but also because he genuinely, sincerely came to believe that it was the more accurate reading of the Constitution. Now, we might still have some quarrel with Frederick Douglass on some of the particulars of his reading, maybe especially with respect to the fugitive slave clause.

But it is a strange thing that this late-arriving, pro-slavery interpretation of the Constitution that we had to refute and overthrow through civil war and constitutional amendment now seems to be holding the field.

I also think that the black nationalist understanding of the nation that comes from Malcolm X and his heirs is playing a big role in this, and that's what I find really so contradictory about Hannah-Jones, because she both is embracing that black nationalist reading of the nation—that it was just white power at work and nothing but white power—while actually trying to find a way to be patriotic. And that's a really hard thing for her to square.

As to your other question, "why does it matter?" it matters because our future is at stake, our self-understanding as a nation is at stake. So it really is like that moment when Lincoln takes on Stephen Douglas.

That was also a moment in which the nation's fundamental self-understanding was at stake. We're at a similar moment right now. And while we don't have Lincoln or Frederick Douglass with us any longer, maybe if we try to be better scholars and take a lesson from those folks we will come through it.

Prof. John Stauffer

Yeah, I would say one thing to your point on Douglass. I've written on him a fair amount myself. I would call him a revolutionary throughout the 1850s. I mean, by the 1850s he downplays in "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" and first it's in part because his audience is mostly a white audience there. Whereas when he gives talks to black audiences, when he just talks to radicals, and in fact, one of the annual meetings that was for radicals is the British West Indian Emancipation Addresses which he gave almost every year. And there he often will emphasize that a slave owner has no right to live. Actually, that's a quote from *My Bondage and My Freedom*. A slaveholder has no right to live. He is willing to use violence. He's a founding member of the radical abolition party, and it's founded in 1855 and explicitly advocates violence, if necessary, in order to vanquish slavery.

So I would define black nationalism in the way that David Walker describes it in his brilliant book. David Walker's appeal to the colored citizens of the world, which is less about integration or separatism, and insists that whites treat blacks on their, blacks, own terms; that if they treat blacks with the kind of pride and respect and dignity that blacks treat themselves, that they don't, that whites do not expect blacks to acquire the mores and the dress and the comportment of whites, but that they should be treated with equal respect. And that's a central theme of black nationalism, this sense of pride. Douglass, when he has to leave the United States for the British Isles after the publication of his first

narrative, which is one of his two bestselling autobiographies, because it's a tell all and he's still legally a slave. And in fact, Hugh Auld publishes a piece in the Baltimore newspaper saying that he will go to any lengths possible to recapture his property. So Douglass has spent two years in the British Isles, and it's the first time he says that there is a virtual dearth of racism. And he comes very close to remaining in the British Isles. The American Anti-Slavery society would have sent his wife and family over there. The main reason and he is very open about the main reason, the chief reason he returns is a sense of responsibility and duty to his fellow blacks to try to end this scourge.

And then again, right before the Civil War in 1859, during the secession crisis, that period between Lincoln's election and Fort Sumter, when right around Lincoln's inaugural address, Douglass becomes despondent that the nation will do anything to make war against these rebels, these people who have committed treason and left the United States, taken up arms against the United States to leave. And Douglass writes in his newspaper that he's planning a trip to Haiti, and if it's the Republic, the glorious Republic that he's read about, he plans to move there. Now he doesn't. He doesn't even go there because a few days later Southerners bombed Fort Sumter starting the war. And Douglass is very insightful as a revolutionary. He recognizes, he's one of the first people to recognize that the bombing of Fort Sumter is the golden opportunity to end slavery. He was, I think, brilliantly savvy at recognizing, of having a pulse on American society as much as anyone.

Diana Schaub

Could I just make a quick reply to John? I don't want to get too much into the semantics of whether someone is a revolutionary or a reformer. I certainly agree that Douglass is a radical and remains a radical

throughout his career. But it does seem to me that something really significant happens in 1851, when he announces that change of opinion about the Constitution. You can see the effect of the change in how he addresses his audience. It's from that point forward that he addresses his audience as fellow citizens.

So after 1851, he is no longer calling for the annulment of the Constitution. He's wielding the Constitution as a weapon. He's not calling for regime change. He's calling for an end to slavery and an end to racial inequality. And those are profound transformations. But he sees them as in line with the nation's saving principles, so that he's working for the perfection, or the living out of the realization of those saving principles. But that really does seem to me a different position.

On the question of violence, Douglass is extremely interesting. After the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, he's got that essay, "Is it Right and Wise to Kill a Kidnapper?" But even then, when he is legitimizing violence, he does so within his understanding of those American principles. He offers a straightforward Lockean argument about what you are authorized to do in defense of your rights or the rights of others. We shouldn't underestimate that.

Prof. John Stauffer

That's different than the laws at the time on the books. You know, like I said, Douglass's defense of his own rights "Is it Wise and Right to Kill a Kidnapper?" Under the circumstances, he sketches out, yes, but it's not right, according to the laws of the country. So I mean, it's essentially ...

Diana Schaub

Yes, we would have to spend some time fleshing this

out. But I think he can make that argument about violence—and it's a radical argument—but in his view, it doesn't set him against those American principles. And as to his returning to the United States, yes, it's certainly true, he returns for his enslaved brothers out of a sense of responsibility. But there is also and always in Douglass, this sense of hope.

Prof. John Stauffer

Yeah, I completely agree. But when I use the term revolutionary, I mean, David Blyden's great biography, he emphasizes Douglass was a revolutionary throughout the 1850s. And what is a revolutionary? A revolutionary, a lot of people have different definitions of a revolutionary, and one is you, you're advocating for immediate change. And in that sense, Garrison is a revolutionary. It doesn't matter whether you're pro-slavery or anti-slavery. If you advocate immediate change, you're a revolutionary. And it's just a means by which you want that immediate change. And Douglass is very clear, he wants immediate change, that he wants change as soon as possible.

Diana Schaub

We may have a different understanding of what a revolutionary is. I guess I would always connect it with the question of regime, and whether you're calling for a fundamentally different regime. I agree that he remains an immediate-ist for the most part, but in shifting to a more political abolitionism, one inevitably has to moderate somewhat one's demands for immediate change. And I think you see that eventually play out in Douglass's greater appreciation of Lincoln and his acknowledgement of the role of political prudence, and that means inevitably a kind of gradualism. Without himself occupying that gradualist position, he comes to appreciate what it can achieve.

Prof. John Stauffer

Right, but that's during the war itself.

Diana Schaub

Yep.

Prof. John Stauffer

And Douglass realizes that amid the violence of the war there is this opportunity to vanquish slavery, and he's brilliant at pointing out that our enemies are slave-owners, our friends are blacks and whites in the north. Douglass is the first person to emphasize that if you want to win the war, you need to treat blacks as equals and as citizens and as soldiers. And if you don't, you're not going to win the war. And by 1864 Lincoln and all the generals, even those who had been racist, anything but abolitionists beforehand—Lincoln says that blacks are a potent weapon. Without them we will lose, with them we will win.

So essentially, despite the different ideals between a lot of whites and blacks, for Lincoln, and for a lot of Republicans, it was simply preserving the union. For Douglass and for most revolutionaries, radicals, it was ending slavery. And by 1863 or '64, they recognize that the distinct or the separate aims had been fused into one. You couldn't end slavery without preserving the union. You couldn't preserve the union without ending slavery. The two aims had coalesced into one. And in a sense, Douglass, I think, is doing that, as were others who were going back and forth between anti-slavery constitutionalism and pro-slavery constitutionalism. When Douglass was part of Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society, he downplayed any kind of advocacy of violence because there was a pacifist element, there was pacifism. So in his brilliant first autobiography he defines the turning point of his life as a fight, his fight with Covey. So he downplays it, well it was a fight, but not that bad of a fight. And then by the 1850s, he's much more open about the same. If a slave owner comes

and tries to take one of my family members, you and I have every right to kill that slave owner. So it's a matter of context in that sense. And so, I think we're agreeing on this.

Diana Schaub

I agree that his espousal of pacifism was never thoroughgoing. The underlying position [allowing for violence in certain situations] was always there.

If I can shift a bit, I wonder what accounts for these absences that we've been talking about, the absence of the white abolitionist tradition and the absence of Frederick Douglass? John, I'm wondering why you think she [Nikole Hannah-Jones] doesn't show any understanding of that biracial, abolitionist movement?

Prof. John Stauffer

Yeah, that's a good question. The short answer is, I don't know. I don't know her. That whole project, it was, you know, as a journalist you're writing, journalists write with guns to their heads; scholars don't. And so a generous answer is that she is a journalist, her staff are journalists, they need to get articles out, that they have a vision they're going to coalesce into a book. And then once the 1619 Project, I mean, it's a hugely popular project. And so they want it in book form right away, and to actually do all the research to address the rich ambiguities would take years. That's why scholars take years to write books. So one answer is that, you know, they ... it's like journalists have a great sense of timing, the timing for a good article, timing for a good book. They know good books; right now is a good time to publish a book on race.

Diana Schaub

You can't say, as she does say, that for the most part

black Americans fought back alone.

Prof. John Stauffer

I agree. And yeah, but okay, so here's another explanation. When I was a grad student at Yale, and I entered in 1993, at that time the abolition movement, for almost all of the 20th century the abolition movement was defined solely as a white movement. There were only two books on black abolitionists, and they were separated from white abolitionists. And part of that is because white Southerners gained control of the story of the Civil War, and from the '30s until really, literally, through the '90s a number of whites characterize the abolition movement as a Nazi, or like a Nazi, or Russia, or totalitarian regime. They refer to the abolitionists as fellow travelers

A number of scholars in the '30s, '40s, and '50s explicitly liken the abolitionists to totalitarians. And so it was part of the way of, you know, essentially creating this white America in which slavery wasn't that bad. It's "the Civil War wasn't about slavery." Manisha Sinha's book, which is only a few years old, is the first book to emphasize that blacks began, former slaves who now have a voice, began the abolition movement, and then from the beginning it becomes an integrated movement. And that's a big book and it's an encyclopedic book, and it's not a book you can read in a day or two, but it is immense.

My first book highlighted the integrated nature [of abolitionism]. I focused on Douglass and McCune Smith, two leading black abolitionists, and Garrett Smith and John Brown. And I discovered that it was the largest biracial correspondence in the United States at the time, in the 19th century. I now realize that the largest is Sumner's correspondence; Charles Sumner's correspondence with blacks is even larger. But you read the correspondence and you realize how profound the integrated nature of the abolition

movement was. But there is a long tradition in which abolitionists were cast solely as white.

And so, you know, I don't know, I don't know her, I'm actually not as familiar with the 1619 Project as perhaps I should be, or a lot of people. I know their mistakes. But I do know journalists. I mean, journalists want to write a powerful, punchy argument, and they want to do it very economically, they want it out, timing there, they have a great sense of timing. And I, instead of trashing the 1619 Project, I think it's a start.

It's like the beginning of a book, but it now needs to be revised. I think it's raised consciousness about the power, the significance of slavery and race in the United States in a way that scholars have not, or more than scholars have been able to. And so just building on, essentially, that first draft and revising it, and getting scholars closely involved with it, I think could lead to a project, or a book or a series of books, that could be more effective, much more effective. So I'm not at all disagreeing with the errors or the limitations of the 1619 Project. But in general, I think it's ... for journalists to work with scholars, I think, is a good idea. Because each has different skills they can bring to the table. And as long as they take each other seriously and work closely together, I think that can be a wonderful collaboration.

Tom Lindsay

We have some questions from the audience. My only comment on this issue is that Madison said that he wrote *The Federalist Papers* with the printer's devil ever at his elbow, right? And lack of time leads to errors, no doubt. But can we simply attribute the 1619 Project's gross errors to the argument that "we were in a hurry?" Does that simply explain the core of their argument, which is that America was founded on slavery and continues to this day with the same moral dynamic?

Prof. John Stauffer

Yeah, that's a great question. I mean, frankly, I don't know the answer to that. I don't know. I think I completely agree with you. I just don't know the answer to that.

You're absolutely right. It's because there are people, there are a number of self-described radicals, both on the left and the right, who are, ... who essentially don't like the project of the United States. And so yeah, it's a great question. And I don't know the answer to it. But regardless of the answer, if there is a rich collaboration, I mean, your example, Madison was a scholar, but he's working with journalists. He's working with them. Let's start there and see what happens.

Tom Lindsay

Although I think Jones, after being buffeted by a number of historians not on the political right, e.g., Princeton's Sean Wilentz, responded that "this was a work of journalism, not a work of history."

Prof. John Stauffer

Right. Right. Which speaks to my point. It's an out. Journalists are writing with a gun to their head and they're under pressure. So not everything is going to be as nuanced. It's not going to be, you know, there are going to be things that are huge exaggerations, are wrong, but the basic story and I disagree with the basic story of saying that the abolition movement is just a white movement and abolitionists were horribly racist. I mean, that actually sounds to me like it comes from a white southerner from much of the 20th century, because they hated the idea. So it's a way of demonizing.

Tom Lindsay

I would agree that what's so alarming is that much of

what we read in the 1619 Project agrees with southern slaveholders' defense of slavery in the first part of the 19th century. That's what's so troubling about this.

Diana Schaub

I guess I see it as much more deliberate, and that it really is designed as a work of propaganda. And the speed with which it is spreading shows how effective that has been. I think we've got a couple of questions here from John Briggs about Garrison's condemnation of the Constitution and whether it is the same as the 1619 Project's damning assessment?

Yes, I think there are clear connections. I would say, in some ways, the 1619 Project is worse because it rejects the Declaration as well. Garrison denounced the Constitution in order to uphold the revolutionary truth of the Declaration. And you have the Southerners doing the flip side of that. They uphold the Constitution and believe that it guarantees the perpetuity of slavery, and they denounced the Declaration as a bunch of self-evident lies. But what the 1619 Project does is renounce both of those charters.

Prof. John Stauffer

I think that's a very good ... I mean, by the 1850s there are a number of Southerners, white Southerners, who engaged in a project to literally rewrite the Declaration to strip away the ideals of equality and freedom. They [video and audio pauses for a few seconds]. They... would say, we should just totally ignore the Declaration. I love Douglass's shift to anti-slavery constitutionalism. Garrison had a harder road to hoe, because of the, I'm actually looking at the Constitution now. I mean, the preamble is actually all anti-slavery constitutionalists said. It's that this whole document is written, the justification for the Constitution is to promote the general welfare and

to secure the blessings of liberty. That's the aim of this document, to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

And so, I mean, as many scholars have noted, the fact that the term slavery, the term black or Negro is never mentioned, that itself is a kind of victory for the anti-slavery delegates. So they use the term person. So you definitely see within the Constitution, if you read it closely, the grappling on the ground at the time, which I actually love. I think kids, students would love that. So to say it's all one thing or all another doesn't lead to as rich of a conversation anyway. Let the students read it themselves. It's like, what do you make of this? I think a lot of seventh graders would be able to recognize well, that both sides are grappling here, both sides are ... at odds. That's what makes it rich.

Diana Schaub

Yes, I think that probably is the best suggestion that we can make, is just to return to the primary materials. We need to teach all of these things. In teaching the 1850s and the Lincoln-Douglas debates, students need to read Steven Douglas and Roger Taney as well as Lincoln.

Prof. John Stauffer

I teach almost all primary sources for that reason, because I want to hear what students have to say. They read it closely and it leads to really rich discussions.

Tom Lindsay

We have another question from the audience, which asks for comments from the two of you on the differences between "English slavery" and "Spanish slavery."

Prof. John Stauffer

Yes, I can speak to that. English slavery—England

really led the way in the emancipation movement. The Somerset decision in 1772 essentially becomes the precedent for ending slavery throughout England. Virtually every black and white abolitionist recognized the importance of working with the British to try to end slavery. And then Britain was the first major European country to end their slave society in the British West Indies. They spent millions of pounds to do so. So it was a compensated emancipation, but the fact that they compensated the masters, it didn't bother [18th-century] Americans in the way it's bothered some critics.

Spain, for a variety of reasons, was much more of a laggard in emancipation. And in fact, Cuba was a Spanish colony, or under Spain. And southern Americans wanted to annex Cuba as part of their effort to expand slavery. And there are a lot of reasons for that. But the best would be ... [you need] to understand the reason for the vigorous anti-slavery aspect of Great Britain. In Great Britain, class was a far greater factor than race, Douglass and others, there were very few blacks, so race wasn't an issue. Class was profound. I mean, at that point, there were like nine different classes [of English society]. And according to some Brits, even today, it's like upper upper middle, lower or upper upper middle, upper or lower mid upper and so on. So what's significant, though, is that the working classes in England industrialized more quickly than the United States. Far more quickly. So factory labor, and the exploitation of working classes happened a lot quicker. But the working classes in England prided themselves on their free labor, prided themselves on being free laborers, no matter how much they were exploited. So this idea of "I am free and I am a laborer" was central to their identity, which meant that when they looked at slaves in the British West Indies, they hated the very idea of someone working without receiving wages, no matter how paltry those wages were.

So in the British Isles, something like 97, 98% of the population were abolitionists. It's huge. Whereas in

the United States, that sense of pride and dignity in work itself wasn't, especially factory work, was not as profound as it was in England, although Lincoln says this when he's running for the president, that most Northerners were actually artisans. They were craftspeople. Most Northerners on the eve of the Civil War were family farmers. So Lincoln emphasized that he believed that every American, white or black, he says, including black women, have the right to receive the fruits of his or her own labor. That reflects a craft or artisanal idea. You're a farmer, or you're a blacksmith, or you're a lawyer, or you're a photographer, or you're a seamstress, or you're a teacher, but you have a craft that you utilize, that you make, earn a living from, you receive the fruits of your own labor. Most Northerners were family farmers. And Lincoln recognized that the free labor ideal coalesced very nicely with anti-slavery.

And there are different reasons why the Brits were far more inclined to connect free labor with anti-slavery. The main one is that the United States had a far greater problem than Britain in that slavery is in their front yard. For Brits slavery is, what, 4,000 miles away? And the seats of power are in London. It's easier to end slavery when your slave society is 4,000 miles away. When it's in your front yard or your backyard—I mean, there was a slave auction house that was less than, it was basically a mile from the U.S. Capitol until 1850. It's literally in the front yard of the United States, you can't avoid it. That makes a huge difference.

Tom Lindsay

Yes. Thank you. We have another question from a member of our audience who asks this, "Why are American public schools adopting the 1619 Project curriculum?"

Prof. John Stauffer

... Diana, your help? Feel free to take a stab?

I don't know. My understanding is that each school system decides for itself. I can just take a brief stab. One is that, you know, the cultural moment we're in. If you believe the *New York Times*, the *New York Times* a month or so ago said that we're in the midst of the largest protest movement at least since the Civil Rights era. And so there's this, there's been, according to many people, a consciousness raising. Okay, gee, gee whiz, race and slavery are important factors in America, so what's an easy textbook? And the 1619 Project is advertising itself as being available, is being designed for the schools. Okay, we'll take that. I mean, Diana you might have...

Diana Schaub

Yes, that's part of it. Teachers always like pre-packaged curricula. So to get a jump on that, and to put something out there, and the website too, it's not just the original essays, but all kinds of study questions and texts, and so on. So they were smart in having all of that prepared. In addition to the cultural moment, there is the underlying phenomenon of white guilt. And I think behind that's a really serious question, and I see it in students. When they take American national government or American political thought, I find it's actually very difficult to get them to even think seriously about something like the separation of powers until you have confronted that first question: Do we have to be ashamed of our founding?

And that's a serious question. And most of them arrive at college having been told "yes, you should be ashamed." "The Declaration doesn't really mean what it says, when they said all men, they didn't mean all men, they gave it a restrictive and exclusionary reading" and "the Constitution itself is a despicable document tainted by these compromises with slavery." It's easy for teachers and students just to second that and say, yeah, here's a whole bunch of stuff that seems to

show that that's true. Instead, it seems to me, what we have to do is really confront that question very seriously, and go back and look at the primary texts and work through the material and come to some judgment, and our judgments will be compounded of both praise and blame.

What I would like to see is us getting to a better balance between that praise and blame. And it requires getting students to step out of themselves and into another time period in another era, not in a relativistic way, but through an act of the historical imagination. And I think that's really missing right now. Students don't read as much literature, they don't read as much real history. And they don't know how to, they don't have that capacity for the historical imagination. And I don't think they're going to get an accurate read on the founders until they're able to do that.

Prof. John Stauffer

Yeah, that's good. It actually makes me think "All the more reason to read the abolitionist's writings themselves." Because yeah, even the Garrisonians, there wasn't a black or white radical who didn't love the Declaration for its advocacy of these natural rights of freedom and equality.

I just taught the Declaration today in class. It's a seminar, and John Adams asked Jefferson to draft it [the Declaration] not because he liked Jefferson necessarily, but he wanted who he thought was the best writer to draft it. So there was an understanding that it was not just a great political document, it also had a literary-ness, that it had a musical quality, and it was something that grabbed you by the throat, that you didn't want to let go of. And those first two paragraphs are brilliant works of prose poetry.

Diana Schaub

I might add that I think there is another underly-

ing issue. And that's our current doubts about the existence of natural rights. So it's not only that people suspect that the founders didn't really apply these natural rights to every human being. But it's also that we aren't so sure ourselves anymore that we believe in natural rights. There's something so absolutist about that. So I think that's another big topic that has to be confronted.

Tom Lindsay

I think what you both are saying about this is correct as to the reasons for the receptivity. I think part of the reason for the receptivity is the growing civic illiteracy, not only of our students, but of those who teach them. We know that 90% of immigrants pass the U.S. citizenship test; all it takes is six out of ten questions answered correctly, with the questions taken from a one hundred question database. So, students have all the questions and answers before they take the test. Well, although the good news is that 90% of immigrants pass it, the bad news is that only 19% of native born Americans under the age of 45 can get even six out of ten right. So I think that when you have a civically illiterate population, it's very easy to see why an argument such as that made by the 1619 Project should appear persuasive.

Prof. John Stauffer

I agree. I follow some people studying literacy in the United States, and I use it in my courses on the slavery, anti-slavery, Civil War era. Literacy rates in the antebellum North were far higher than they were in the antebellum South because the North advocated common school, they started advocating common schools. In the South, slaves were prohibited from reading or writing. It was the law in virtually every Southern state. And so the illiteracy rate was a lot higher. Every scholar of literacy has pointed out that with the rise of the Internet and the rise of people

receiving information visually, Americans are reading far less. You read far less and it throws that whole question of democracy into question, because democracy depends upon the ability of the electorate to be able to read so they can first understand those running for office and to be able to distinguish between a confidence man and a statesman.

Tom Lindsay

Yes, and all this is happening at a time when we have more and more students graduating, or at least attending, college, than ever before in our history. This suggests that some of the responsibility for this has to be laid at the front door of our universities.

Prof. John Stauffer

Yeah, you're right. I'm at an elite institution, Harvard, but we have a general education curriculum; everyone has to take, within the general education curriculum, courses in the sciences and the social sciences and the humanities. But one of the moves in a lot of higher education, or in higher education over the past ten, fifteen years, is to do away with requirements that you choose a major. But everything else can be an elective. You might have requirements within the major, but if you don't want to take a science, you don't have to. Or if you want to be a scientist, you can take a humanities course but you don't have to. And I mean, there's a huge debate on it. I've always believed that part of education is exposing students to the world of knowledge, not just to the field they're interested in.

Tom Lindsay

Let me try to get in at least one more question from our audience.

Diana Schaub

Tom, are you looking at the same one I'm looking at?

Do you have the one about the indentured servants?

Tom Lindsay

Oh, yes. I was going to try to get to that and the other one, but would you read the one about the indentured servants?

Diana Schaub

Yes, it's very short. It's from someone named G. Seaver who says "Robert Seaver," I take it to be an ancestor, "arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1634 as an indentured servant. Where does this stand in the protest hierarchy?" I'm not quite sure what's being asked there, but if you are asking whether you're going to be in line for reparations or not, I suspect not.

Prof. John Stauffer

The vast majority of Europeans who came to North America were indentured servants, which meant that they were unfree. The difference between an indentured servant and a slave is that as an indentured servant you had to work for no wages. You were essentially owned by an owner, you were indentured to someone else. But after a period of years, it was usually ten or fifteen years, then you acquired your freedom. Indentured servitude functioned on the ground, similar to slavery ... you really didn't have much of a public voice. And in fact, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, that classic book in American history, points out how indentured servants collaborated or saw themselves as slaves, and then there was a divide between them. The main difference legally between an indentured servant and a slave is that a slave was also seen literally and legally as chattel, meaning that one could be bought or sold. A servant, you could, transfer, you could actually sell the servitude for the servant, but only for the years left in the

contract.

Diana Schaub

It might also be worth mentioning that the distinction between indentured servitude and slavery was one that Frederick Douglass made much of in his interpretation of the so called fugitive slave clause in the Constitution. Douglass construed that "fugitive slave" clause as not, in fact, having any reference at all to fugitive slaves. He believed that it could apply only to indentured servants who had signed contracts, and who therefore had an obligation and could be held to that legal contract. If they tried to skip out of town they could be returned to the person to whom that service or labor may be due. I think that's probably not a correct interpretation. At least it certainly was not the mainstream understanding of the clause. There was understood to be such a thing as a fugitive slave clause.

But here you see Douglass's literalism and reading the words carefully at work. He does go back to Madison's *Notes*, and he says, look, when this idea came up, the delegates from South Carolina and Georgia said that we want a clause in here that says that fugitives from slavery should be delivered up like criminals. We don't get any debate in the general session, it gets tossed back to the committee. We don't really know what happens there, but the language we get back is very different. And now there's no mention of slavery at all. And Douglass says, if it doesn't say slave, it doesn't mean slave. And there certainly is a class of people whom this language could apply to. As Douglass says, the clause does seem to carry implications of contract. And so he adopts this interpretation that does away with the fugitive slave clause, which means that the 1793 law and the 1850 law don't have constitutional standing in his view. I think it really shows the limits of Douglass's moral tolerance, that he would have had a very

hard time looking on the Constitution favorably if it had included a fugitive slave clause. It seems to me this is also the main point of disagreement between Douglass and Lincoln in the way in which they read the Constitution.

Prof. John Stauffer

Yeah, so I can just read for people who haven't memorized the fugitive slave clause, it's Article Four, "no person held to service or labor in one state under the laws thereof, escaping into another shall in consequence of any law or regulation therein be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due." That's why anti-slavery constitutionalists were far more popular. There were far more of them than there were pro-slavery, because it's like, you see the language that they're trying to jump circles or go through hoops to downplay the legitimacy for slavery in the Constitution. With this, you know, person, it's "held to service or labor." It's as though the framers or Madison or whoever actually was responsible for banning this clause, is embarrassed by it, is uncomfortable with it. And we know that it's a function of—during the constitutional debates, delegates from Georgia and South Carolina, they wanted the very term slavery to be explicit in the Constitution. They wanted blacks to be explicit in the Constitution. So in a sense, this language is a victory for the anti-slavery delegates.

Diana Schaub

Yes, because it doesn't give any moral standing to the institution. If it is the case that it is providing this protection to the slave holders, it makes very clear that slavery exists only by municipal or state law. Right? Slavery exists under the laws of the states, and not at the level of the federal Constitution. So it is an instance of quite brilliant craftsmanship, to

make a prudential accommodation with the institution of slavery, while at the same time depriving the institution of moral standing.

Prof. John Stauffer

Right. And unfortunately, the precedents that build up are such the hurdle is that it was both, you know, laws, closely reading the Constitution, and the precedents that are developed. And there's so many precedents of people, of lawyers and judges interpreting this as sanctioning slavery. It becomes by the 1840s difficult to overturn that. But I completely agree.

Tom Lindsay

I'm afraid we only have about three minutes left. So before I ask each of you to give a ninety second final statement, I want to tell our audience that this conference will return tomorrow at noon Eastern, 11:00 Central time, and there Professor Susan Hansen, who's the chair of the history department at the University of Dallas, will talk about the spirit of the Adams family. Professor Schaub, would you like to offer your concluding remarks?

Diana Schaub

Well, I've never been much for concluding statements. I think I will just say, read more Frederick Douglass. Read more Abraham Lincoln. And stay away from contemporary authors completely.

Tom Lindsay

Amen to that.

Diana Schaub

Except for those on the panel here.

Prof. John Stauffer

I'll put in a plug for one of my books: *The Portable Frederick Douglass*. I collected, with Skip Gates, some of what we think are Douglass's great writings. But just to echo what Diana said, read the abolitionist themselves. Read them for yourself. Read black and white abolitionists, male and female abolitionists. There are some very good volumes. There's a nice, a wonderful little collection of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper articles. In fact, Douglass and Garrison helped to create modern journalism where they lead with the opening thesis. I mean, before them, much of, most of, almost all of journalism, it was part of the belletristic tradition. So it often took you two thirds of the essay before you knew what the basic argument was. And they were both magnificent journalists. But they also wrote [in a literary or artistic style]. Douglass is, I think, almost unmatched as an orator. He could, in his own day, command one of the highest speaking fees of white or black orators, during the golden age of oratory. And abolitionists recognized part of the reason they're such good writers and such great speakers is because they recognized the degree to which words could be such potent weapons.

Tom Lindsay

I know that I speak for everyone in the audience when I say thank you to both of you for your sterling presentations and your conversation thereafter. This has been very illuminating. Thank you both.

Teaching American History

Thomas Lindsay, Richard A. Johnson III,
Robert Maranto, Jamie Gass

Tom Lindsay

Good afternoon. My name is Tom Lindsay, and I work at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. It's my pleasure to welcome you back to the National Association of Scholars' conference on the 1619 Project. What we're going to be examining now with our panel is the topic of how to teach American history properly. And we have three distinguished guests whom I would like to introduce, and then they will make short statements. In alphabetical order, we'll begin with Jamie Gass. Jamie Gass is the Pioneer Institute's Director of the Center for School Reform. He will be followed by Richard Johnson, who is the Director of the Booker T. Washington Initiative at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and I'm proud to say he is my colleague. Last but not least, Professor Robert Maranto is the 21st century Chair in Leadership at the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. Welcome to all three of you. Jamie, we'll begin with you. Would you give a short presentation about your view of this subject of how to teach American history properly?

Jamie Gass

Sure, Tom, thank you so much. And I really want to thank NAS, Peter Wood, and David Randall and others for putting on this conference and all the excellent work that they do. I've known Peter for quite a long time and really admire him in the leadership that he's provided at NAS.

So I come from the K-12 space. I've worked in and around K-12 education for almost 30 years now. And I kind of have a tale to tell here about Massachusetts, which is where the Pioneer Institute, where I'm from, is located. So in K-12 education I think generally people agree that over the last 25 years or so Massachusetts has emerged as the preeminent K-12 education performer as measured by NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress], and all of

the other academic measures. There's a lot of things that we did well, and a lot of them, frankly, are attributable to the quality of the political leadership we had at the time, but also through the careful academic work of Sandra Stotsky. She really developed high quality standards in English and math and science and social studies. And she did it by really bringing high quality academic content specialists to the table. A lot of what folks know about K-12 education, why it's struggled so much, is that it's been sort of pedagogically heavy, held captive in a lot of regards to the School of Education. Well, Sandy and the work of the people via the reform law in '93 really helped break that. They really moved the conversation towards academic quality in a serious, serious way. And then they aligned it with standardized tests, MCAST tests, high stakes tests, teacher testing, so that the teachers and the students were all going to be tested on the same material. But the central focus really of the work that Sandy did was on academic quality, and bringing a commitment to classic literature, poetry, and drama, high quality mathematics standards that were developed by mathematicians, and historians.

And so the one area that we sort of have fallen short on has been U.S. history, even though the original education reform law as crafted by Bill Weld and the democratic co-authors was quite specific: the Federalist Papers and the founding documents and state history and national history should be included. And in fact, it was just much more specific than any other content area. The reality is that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in its wisdom essentially ignored it. She developed these great standards that I think were universally regarded by right leaning, left leaning people as very traditional, high quality, attentive to the appropriate political and military history of the country and the West, as well as, I think, a very fair representation of often underrepresented groups. But the sort of entrenched bureau-

cratic establishment in our state just obstructed it. And it really started pretty early on as kind of a revolt of the clerks. But you know, ten years or more ago, they canceled the test. Deval Patrick came in and he canceled the test. And then they began to work at saying oh, well, there's too much history in the history standards. And then after sort of dribbling out the clock over and over again, then they finally made some revisions to those standards just a couple years ago. And instead of subtracting things, they added things, and most of it really had the outlook of I think what people are familiar with now as history or civics as basically community organizing. There's a lot of influence from iCivics, a national organization, which frankly, has pushed for video games instead of academic content. The general outlook of the revisions really seemed to look as though the country started in about 1960. And then everything began to have more of a kind of a victim's view of history, rather than the traditional political or military history that I think most people for decades would have been able to identify.

But I think, as well as Massachusetts did in terms of its overall performance, and neglecting history, one of the big problems here is that a lot of, even some of the allies on the right, and I'll mention the Fordham Institute as being one of them, they often have kind of made common cause with a lot of the DC-based trade groups, who for decades really have had no interest at all in the liberal arts or in high quality academics. They've been much more interested in K-12 education, and education more generally, as workforce development. And from my point of view that's not really education. That's properly understood as training. And so the outlook of these national players—really kind of brushing aside the Constitution and federalism—have pushed for things like school to work, which was done in the 90s. We've had iterations of Race to the Top and Common Core and social/emotional learning, all these

different fads, and the willingness of many of the people in the education establishment to give cover to the College Board as they were doing some significant damage to the SAT and APUSH. It's all kind of set the stage now so that history is so far back in the corner in terms of what's taught, even in a high performing state like Massachusetts or a state that had good standards, or in California where Diane Ravitch did a quite a good job with traditional history standards.

But this recent push to nationalize everything has not only shunted history aside, because well, No Child Left Behind, and it's true of ESSA; and a lot of the federal initiatives really have I think, in fairness, narrowed the curriculum to primarily English and math. But it just set the stage where the people that are pushing for the 1619 and other, what I regard as sort of overly politicized visions of history or of teaching America's past, now have lots of running room, because on top of this the country is not doing particularly well, as measured by NAEP, on history and civics. The current moment and political correctness are all coming to bear.

And so there's a huge void, and that void from my point of view is often being filled with folks with an overt political agenda. It's not really history in any way, shape, or form, or even civics that they're interested in; it is history as political activism. And there was a bill just a couple years ago in Massachusetts, the Governor of Massachusetts ultimately signed it. But this bill really was mandatory civic engagement. It sounds like an oxymoron, but it's sort of volunteerism that is compelled, and he had some reservations about the provisions, but ultimately made some tweaks and then they signed off. And I think we know—whether it's at a state like Massachusetts, or frankly, a lot of other states—you see that in the State Departments of Education, which really not only control in a lot of instances the K-12 curricu-

lum and the testing, but also have input on teacher preparation. Over the long haul, they know that they can wait out any kind of incremental reservations that people might have.

But my outlook really, from the beginning of all this work for 25 or 30 years, has really been kind of informed by the founders. Anyone familiar with the Founding Fathers knew and knows that history, and a knowledge of history, not only of our country, but Western Civilization, is elemental to understanding representative government. And that that was the fundamental outlook of K-12 education. That's what they thought the primary purpose of schooling was, whether it was being conducted in folks' homes, or through religious organizations, or whether it was publicly supported schools. And so that's the outlook that I think that should be prevailing. I think that polling data often shows that that's the outlook that most people prefer. And yet, through one means or another, the education establishment—it's not just the teachers' unions, it's the Governors Association, the CCSSO, a lot of these trade organizations—they really don't have much interest in the liberal arts or history being taught in kind of a meaningful way; a way that is going to inform citizenship, that is grounded in background knowledge the way someone like E.D. Hirsch has talked about, but it really is a kind of warmed-over workforce development outlook. And in some respects, it doesn't matter whether you're talking about a Republican administration or a Democratic administration in DC, they all kind of in one way, shape, or form have signed off on it.

The moment that we find ourselves in in terms of COVID is nature's hand working here, but the crisis that we have in K-12 education in terms of teaching history is totally man-made. It's easily traceable, it's got a variety of different players that have, for quite some time, been opposed to teaching kids the

fundamentals of their shared past. And the balkanization and fragmentation that you see today is the natural result of that. So I may be offering more of an autopsy than how it should be taught. But I think that the anti-model that I've explained hopefully will help set the stage for how we can think about it going forward.

Tom Lindsay

Yes, that's very helpful. Thank you. Dr. Johnson?

Richard Johnson

Hear me?

Tom Lindsay

Now we can, yes.

Richard Johnson

Thank you to the National Association of Scholars and of course, David, Peter, and everybody that brought this together. Thank you, Tom, and our colleagues at TPPF [Texas Public Policy Foundation]. It's interesting. Dr. Frankel, Victor Frankel, said in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Once you find the why, then you know what you have to do to achieve things." The "what" is no big deal. And I think, once we address the "why," why is it that that history and civics have been watered down to a degree of ineffectiveness in our education systems, then the voices of truth, and the voices for the necessity and reality that our children need to know history and civics, become more profound. When we look at it—and I was listening to Jamie a moment ago, and most of his points were directly spot dead-on when he talks about how politics comes into play. Here in the state of Texas, the State Board of Education, basically approves curriculum. And so who's on the State

Board of Education, and what type of folks on the State Board of Education then, what politics comes into play with that?

I would differ a little bit in terms of the critique associated with the teachers' union, because I think they're a very powerful group and they influence the politics of our day through their powerful lobbyists that tend to move the agenda in their direction, even though it may be coming from members of the State Board of Education. Why is it that the powers that are behind them would want us to muzzle the mouth of history and true history, and then teaching that to our students? The why is because if you read the Constitution, the U.S. Constitution, and you read the Declaration of Independence, then you begin to understand the spirit of freedom that those documents were formed in. And then at an early age you put that in the mindset of children, that spirit of freedom. And if those things are then taken out, say, well, we're not going to allow them to read that. Because once you read the Declaration of Independence, then you're also challenged to find out where did the founders come up with the Declaration of Independence? Where did they do their research? And then you start to read a little bit about Montesquieu. And then you start to read a little bit about John Locke, and you start to read a little bit about Blackstone, and find out that this thing, history, goes further and further back. And it ties itself into the free will of God, a sovereign God, that declares all men to be created equal, and endowed with certain inalienable rights, and freedom is one, and life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. And so when we see that being muzzled, then we have to try to figure out why these folks are doing what they're doing. And the reason that they're doing what they're doing? Because it is an attack on freedom.

And if you look in certain areas, that's the reason why I'm such a big supporter of parents having a

right to choose the best educational opportunities or options for their kids to meet their kid's needs, the children's needs, simply because if you look in your urban centers that right is almost wiped out. And where do you find people who hate, who are disgruntled with America most? Generally, in your urban centers. Where do you find people who can hate the flag and who will basically charge every wrong thing that's happening in the world to the United States of America? The bigger portion of those folks, you're going to find them in the urban centers, the inner cities of America, where these particular school boards have basically erased a pathway to learn about the real true history of the United States of America.

And I'd like to talk about the U.S. Constitution because I see the Constitution, and I tell my students, the Constitution is a glorious document of freedom. And if you are a freedom fighter, that is your sword. You pick up your sword, because we saw Abraham Lincoln pick up that sword in the Cooper's address, he really brought it out in his Cooper Union address and utilized that to move forward and then come forward with, well it started a Civil War. But the thing of it is, some things needed to be changed, because basically the document does not substantiate man as property. And it never expressly or distinctly mentions man as property. And so the South basically felt that the Constitution should protect their right to own their property. But the Constitution never said that. But if we never read it, and our kids are never taught to read it, then they won't know that the Constitution referred to all people as persons, even in Article One, Section Two. And so if our children are never taught to read that, then they would grow up believing that the Founding Fathers of America hated black people and expressly put them in there as slaves. But slavery isn't mentioned until the 13th amendment. And that's when Lincoln steps in and takes it upon, not just himself, but takes an opportunity to help the U.S. Constitution grow up a little

bit more, come more into its own. And then we see 99 years later, with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the U.S. Constitution grows a little bit more into its own. But it's always growing into the point where the Founding Fathers wanted it to be, which is a nation of free men.

And so we can't look at the U.S. Constitution in a snapshot, we have to look at it as a growing document, but then understand each time it grows a little bit what's going on in the social and political climate of that day. And so I believe that there are forces out there that do not want our young people to learn these things early on. And I think that those forces are behind the school boards, well, I don't know how other states operate, but I know in Texas, the Texas School Board, Texas Board of Education, are the ones who approve curricula. But let's just say, the body that approves the curriculums, who's behind that body, and it usually will be, you'll find, political forces behind that body that are manipulating the system and then allowing a situation to exist where we're watering down who America is, what America is, and what we stand for in America. And that's our fight. You know, at the end of the day, when the die is cast and all is said and done, folks are going to have to hear the voices of the scholars that spend decades and spend their careers studying the particular subject matter. And they are the subject matter experts in the subject matter. Expert voices are going to have to be heard far beyond where our political forces are allowing us to be heard at this moment. Thank you, Tom.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Dr. Johnson. We now turn to Dr. Maranto.

Robert Maranto

Hopefully, can you all hear me?

All

Yeah.

Robert Maranto

(Is America Over? Heritage, History, and 1619)

I suspect immigrants have a much more positive view because they've seen other places. If you have never seen other places, you might think that America is pretty bad. But we're actually among the best houses in a pretty bad global neighborhood.

But my talk, I'm glad to send it to anybody as kind of a draft, it's "Is America Over?: Heritage, History, and 1619." I was struck by what both of my predecessors said here. Last year a Monmouth University poll found that a significant number of Republicans, 37%, thought that Trump was a better president than Washington. That was the good news. The bad news is the party of the educated, the Democrats, by a nearly 3 to 1 majority thought that Obama was better than Washington. I used to be a presidency scholar, and I still serve on the C-Span board of historians and political scientists which ranks presidents, and I have to say no, just no. Trump and Obama, objectively, are not up there with Washington. We're not teaching history if people believe this kind of thing.

So I plan to outline the differences between heritage and history. I'll suggest that 1619 proposes to replace both history and heritage with a negative heritage, a deficit model of America. I will suggest several ways to counter this negative heritage. I believe the 1619 culture war is in many ways the defining political conflict of 2020. Honestly, if the majority loses, America

could very easily end. My grandparents were Sicilian, so their options were limited. But my family, we speak English well, we're well educated, we can always decamp to Canada or Australia. But we'd rather stay here. This is actually a very nice place, as my grandparents knew all too well. To keep it, we have to teach our history, and also our heritage.

Heritage versus History.

Heritage differs from history. All peoples have a heritage. Not all people have history. Heritage tells the positive stories about a tribe, providing the reasons why that tribe should continue. A friend of mine, a historian, was offered the chance to be the historian for the Marine Corps. He thought about it, and ultimately said no, because while he respected the Marines, Marines don't do history, they do heritage. He wanted to do history.

Heritage is why we want the tribe to continue on. It's a collection of stories about why we're important, and why we're great in some way, if not the greatest in every way. History is different. History is more often a discourse among intellectuals, what really happened, and how different people might view it. Which is one reason why we need diverse historians, probably ethnically but certainly ideologically diverse, who might ask a different set of questions. Historians strive, or should strive, for something like objectivity through scientific or quasi-scientific processes of testing theories, as Sir Karl Popper put it, of conjectures and refutations. This works best if we have a diverse set of people asking the questions, to ask different kinds of questions. 1619 is a result of *The New York Times*, a very, very non-diverse set of people who started out with a certain mindset about America, so inevitably it was going to be deeply flawed. Not necessarily insincere, but deeply, deeply flawed.

History is in search of objective truth. History is also comparative. History compares one thing to another thing. So we don't study Napoleon because he was short. There were a lot people who were short, I'm short. We study Napoleon because he did amazing things militarily and governmentally. Some of them were horrible, but they were amazing, right? We didn't study Stalin because he had really bad acne. Why should we study America for its slavery, given that when America was founded, virtually every nation state had slavery? All of them. Why would our Founders have created the U.S. to protect slavery, when it was protected everywhere already? It makes no sense on the face of it. Our Founders would have to have been the most foolish founders ever. For *The New York Times*, the so-called newspaper of record, to claim this shows a remarkable ignorance of comparative history.

Telling the truth about slavery

So here is my first proposal to fight ignorance. You will see on the screen a map of the abolition of slavery across the globe: [visit [this page](#) to view the map].

I want us to lobby to put this in every school room in America. As you'll see, America was not a laggard on abolition; indeed some states were well ahead of the curve. When the Civil War happened, twenty six nation states representing most of the world still had slavery. In fact, the term *slave* comes from Slav, because the Slavs were enslaved by other Europeans, by Turks, by Arabs. All would capture Slavs and sell them; hence the term slave. Very few people know this. I got it from Thomas Sowell's wonderful essay, "The Real History of Slavery" in his book, *Black Rednecks and White Liberals*. Look at the map: slavery was nearly everywhere until quite recently. It was a wonderful achievement by the West, by largely British and Anglo Americans anchored in liberal theory to have gotten rid of slavery, mostly in just one

century, the 1800s. This was an incredible achievement. So it is very galling when I hear people like former Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust apologize for Harvard's legacy of slavery, when I know darn well that as the university president she was soliciting money from Saudi princes who in their youth owned people, because Saudi Arabia did not get rid of slavery until 1962. I would never define Saudi Arabia by the fact that it was a laggard on slavery, by the way, since that would be very disrespectful. Slavery played a role in the 1860 American presidential contest, as we know, and the legacy of slavery played a role in the 2020 presidential election. Few of us know, however, that slavery actually played a role in the 2019 Mauritanian presidential contest where the anti-slavery candidate got 18%, losing very badly. Slavery is still a thing in Mauritania and in various other places. But again, I think it would be wrong, even bigoted to define Mauritania that way. Islamic countries lagged behind on abolition. Yet as someone who has done considerable fieldwork in Islamic schools, I would never define Islam that way. To define Islam by its worst characteristics would seem incredibly bigoted. So as an American, I see it as incredibly bigoted, incredibly anti-American, to define my country by the fact that for a long time, a long time ago, it had slavery. I'm just really offended by that. People should be complaining about that, and it isn't history.

Defining America by the fact that it once had slavery is not history, nor scientific, nor comparative. It is an attempt to destroy our heritage and impose a different negative heritage. It is deficit thinking, to use a term from the left, explaining why our tribe, the American tribe, should *not* continue. That would be the only natural conclusion of teaching only the most negative parts of American history, in the most negative possible way. It would be as if when teaching a course on African American History, one would spend endless hours on cocaine dealer Frank

Lucas, mass murderer Wayne Williams, and corrupt judge Alcee Hastings, while spending no time on Colin Powell, Jackie Robinson, George Washington Carver, Barack Obama, Phyllis Wheatley, or the Harlem Renaissance. Only someone who hated African Americans would use this approach. Reasonable people would call them out as bigots. And we need to be calling out *The New York Times* as anti-American, because that is what they are.

My third key point, implied above, is to read Thomas Sowell's "Real History of Slavery." It's amazing. You need to require it in high school and junior high civics classes. Put it online for free. See that your local school boards and principals read it. Your organization has the capability to do that. "The Real History of Slavery" is the antidote to 1619.

Postmodernism and Marketing: The roots of 1619

So why, like coronavirus, did 1619 spread so fast? Supposedly, 1619 is now in over 3,000 school systems. On the elite level it spread because of incredible homogeneity among elites. Very few among the elites are the children or grandchildren, of immigrants, like me; among intellectual elites, fewer still are among the center right, and there are serious efforts to stifle those few who are. It's a very problematic and often successful censorship.

Here Standpoint Theory is something you need to know about. A book that all of you should read, it should be like the book of the year, is *Cynical Theories* by Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay.

It is interesting to observe that when scholars have corrected the people writing *The 1619 Project* on some of their grievous factual errors, they respond, "well, that's your opinion." This reflects standpoint theory, which has swept through academia, as explained and critiqued in *Cynical Theories* by Pluck-

rose and Lindsay. As they show, standpoint theory and other postmodern theory represents an attack on science, on the idea that there are objective truths. Without objective truths, empirically verifiable and transmissible to all, everything is up for grabs, meaning that everything is about who has what power. Basic mathematics and empirical science are denounced as expressions of white privilege, just as Nazis described Einstein's approach to physics as "Jewish science." In the perverted postmodern approach to truth, if you can cancel culture somebody or censor them, you are the winner. You are ahead. Alas, these approaches to inquiry now have enormous purchase among elites, and they are using it. Witness *The New York Times* editor fired in June for allowing Tom Cotton's editorial calling for U.S. troops to restore order during the riots, or *The Philadelphia Inquirer* commentary editor fired, quite literally, for approving a headline saying that buildings matter too. Read Pluckrose and Lindsay to fully understand this.

On the non-elite level, great marketing is part of the success of 1619, and of Black Lives Matter, which I actually have some sympathy for. I've done Black Lives Matter related scholarship because I do believe police can do their work better. I had a scholarly article on this in *Public Integrity* in October, and commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* in June. We can make progress on both reducing police killings of civilians, and on reducing homicides, but I think the movement has been used in terrible ways, unlikely to bring progress on saving black lives or anything else. So why has it had such an impact?

In practice, both 1619 and Black Lives Matter are not works of history or social science, but marketing, snappy slogans and pictures, drama and emotional content, but not much real meat. These are essentially marketing works. And so we need to do counter-marketing. We must market, and market well. For

starters, have that map with when slavery was abolished everywhere in every classroom in America. Have discussions about why our nation abolished slavery before, not after, most others did. Just looking at a map makes it a lot harder to argue that America was founded for slavery. The facts are right in front of you.

We should also discuss why slavery was abolished in different places, at different times, by different groups. The British Empire, for all its flaws, was the greatest abolitionist force, even greater than our Grand Army of the Republic. Winston Churchill in his youth played a role in a cavalry charge in Khartoum to abolish slavery in the Sudan. He went on to fight slavery in Nazi Germany and in Stalin's Russia, in an incredible career doing more than perhaps any other single person to promote human freedom. We should all learn about and teach our children about Churchill, a true hero whose life makes a great story.

E.D. Hirsch: How public schooling's disdain for facts facilitates 1619

Stories are what marketing is all about. People want to believe in something. And if we don't tell people the accurate stories about America, people will be looking for something to believe in, and 1619 and other essentially fraudulent stories will come to fill the void. Here I want to mention a name that Jamie Gass mentioned briefly, E.D. Hirsch. Check out the wonderful *Wall Street Journal* interview of Hirsch on 9/11. Hirsch has had a number of great books that I would recommend to anybody, but particularly *The Schools We Need: And Why We Don't Have Them* and *The Making of Americans*. I cite them in almost everything I write. Hirsch says if we don't build systems, if we don't teach people why you want to be an American, and if we don't teach people American values, like free speech, like freedom of religion, and representative government, then support for those values will

wither away, which indeed you see with the woke generation. E.D. Hirsch was writing and saying this forty years ago, and still is today at age 92. He has a curriculum, it's a damn good curriculum, several thousand schools use it, and every state education commissioner should be trying to get their state to adopt E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge. It is wonderful. And we should use it as parents. When my kids were little, I would read to them from E.D. Hirsch's bestsellers, *What Your First Grader Should Know*, *What Your Second Grader Should Know*, etc, from pre-K to seventh grade. Hirsch tells stories about history and science, since people learn by stories.

Hirsch himself was treated terribly by the education community at the University of Virginia and elsewhere. And I'll just relate one of those anecdotes he tells in *The Making of Americans*. I knew about this earlier, but he would not let me tell it until he published it because he wanted to be loyal to UVA until he retired. Hirsch gave a talk to a bunch of educators. One audience member asked him, when you put together this curriculum what was the most interesting thing you learned? Hirsch talked about how he learned why the moon goes around the earth. And somebody said, well do you think that made you a better person? Frankly, if we value learning, then yes, knowing more makes you a better person. A huge problem in public education and in schools of education in particular is that those in the system are not into education as regular academics conceive of it. They focus on the social and custodial aspects of schooling, not the academic aspects.

On this, Jonathan Wai and I have an article in the *Journal of Intelligence* called "Why Intelligence Is Missing from American Education Policy and Practice, and What Can Be Done About It." As we explain, the field of educational leadership developed during the Progressive Era, as an attempt to turn schools into factories batch processing students. I

joke, and it is not really a joke, that the field of educational leadership represents the best of business theory circa 1910. Educational leadership, then and now, intended to turn schools into factories batch processing students, with teachers as factory workers. The system was designed to attract compliant teachers, not intelligent teachers. Moreover, the field of educational leadership arose when professional meant male, so a key goal of schools was to attract males into educational leadership positions. As part of this, schools emphasize athletics. I'm not generally a social justice oriented scholar, but I have to admit that when you look at a school nowadays, promotion into leadership is tied to race and gender, gender in particular. Most teachers are women, but most principals and nearly three-quarters of superintendents are male. Most male principals and superintendents are former coaches, and virtually all played sports. (I have national data demonstrating that. Google my name and "Boys will be superintendents.") These leaders are for the most part good people, decent and hard-working. Unfortunately, they are not into academics, since that is not what they valued when they were in school. I was on the school board for five years and saw all this close up. Superintendents and principals would say things like your kids are taking too many Advanced Placement classes. You need to have them come to football games. People value what they value, right? These are good guys, but they are not into learning. One principal, a former principal of the year in another state, hired at least two math teachers who just didn't know math; we are a college town, so there were parent complaints. The view of the principal and much of the administration was that math teachers do not need to know math, because the kids can download it. In response, I asked if we would hire an offensive line coach for the football team who does not know how to protect the quarterback against a blitz, because after all, the kids can download it. Administrators saw this as different, to which I

replied, it is different because to you it is important. But remember in this town some of us think math is important. And that made some difference in hiring the following year, but I suspect that was a very short-lived victory.

This sort of thing is going on everywhere. Public education systems have an ingrained contempt for facts, which makes our administrators, teachers and students susceptible to accepting falsehoods, like 1619. And unfortunately, we are now more susceptible to this sort of fake news than ever before. Frankly, what held public school systems together for many decades was the oppression of women and blacks. Until the 70s, due to racial and sex discrimination, if you were college educated and female or black, being a public school teacher was the best job you could get. We had amazing teachers who knew academic content. I was the beneficiary of the last generation of those teachers back in the 1970s. Now they are mostly gone, or at least gone from public education. Billie Gastic at NYU estimates that among women with IQs in the top 10%, in 1971 roughly a quarter went into teaching; today only a tenth do. Those smart people haven't disappeared from the planet, but they have largely disappeared from teaching. They are instead going into more lucrative fields, where they are treated as professionals rather than factory workers. There are exceptions, of course. I'm pleased to say that in my town, our English teachers recently blocked the imposition of an anti-racism curriculum because it avoided a lot of great literature, not to mention basics like grammar. Yet these are the exceptions. Generally, the absence of real academic content has left educators and regular people disarmed. They lack the basic knowledge to discern when something is complete and utter hogwash.

America is not (very) racist

And yet even if they lack facts, many educators do

have the common sense to know that defining America by its racism is essentially fake news. On that, let me share another picture.

[Shows picture of kids.]

My son and his friends would hate me sharing this, but it is a good and fairly typical example of today's multiracial America. My son goes to the state university in Texas that most years has the largest number of National Merit Scholars, the University of Texas at Dallas. UTD is only about a third white Anglo. My son's very lucrative major, computer science, and in particular his Honors Program is probably about ten percent white Anglo. This picture shows him getting an award, and you may notice that he seems to be the only white Anglo on the stage. The students winning the awards, and the corporate sponsors awarding them, are largely foreigners, immigrants, or first-generation Americans with roots in South Asia, East Asia, or Latin America. Now if one defines America as a racist place, how could this happen? How could immigrants from Nigeria have higher mean incomes than whites? How could Asian Americans make substantially more than whites? Of course, the reason is that America is not a very racist nation. We are a country of people like Barack Obama, Nikki Haley, and my old friend Rod Paige, who are working hard and doing fine, even though they have very dark skins. Defining America by its racism is wrongheaded, and plainly false on its face, almost laughable. So why do we not teach that many immigrant groups have enjoyed such success?

I actually asked my son once whether being a white guy affects what you do. He said nobody cares about your race if you're a good computer programmer, and it was kind of a dumb question. My son's best friend at UTD was strongly encouraged by his family to return to their third world country to take over the

family business. He politely refused, because America is better, freer, less corrupt. He is glad he was born in Texas, an American citizen, because compared to elsewhere, America is a good place for people of all races.

Relatedly, I divide American colleges and universities into two types: universities that work, and universities that woke, if you want to woke, and network rather than work. You might fit right in at Harvard, UT Austin, or many other places. If you want to go to universities that value work, like the old City University of New York, go to University of Texas at Dallas. Go to some of the heavily Asian and Hispanic universities in the UC system like UC-San Diego, where my daughter might go. Those represent our American future, where the new products will be invented. The people there are often quite patriotic. They like America, because like my son's friend, they know the alternatives. We need to teach about that. I would add that it will be people like my son's friends, and people like Nikki Haley and Marco Rubio, who will lead this movement in a lot of ways, because it will be somewhat harder for the media to accuse them of racism.

Some ideas for reform

First, think curriculum. A basic step is to get that map of when a country abolished slavery in every classroom in America. As I said, on abolition, our nation was ahead of the curve. A more vital, and much harder step would be to get your state to adopt Core Knowledge or something similar. Incidentally, E.D. Hirsch's Wall Street Journal interview on 9-11 was titled "Bad Teaching is Tearing America Apart." He's absolutely right. The Core Knowledge Foundation has immense possibilities. It's never had the money and the vision to go national the way 1619 does. But what if the *Washington Post* decided to promote Core Knowledge in the way *The New York*

Times has promoted 1619? It could become a de facto national curriculum in short order.

Second, think decades. We must think of the battle to save America as a thirty year battle. *The New York Times* has been at this a long time. We need to be at this for as long as it takes, or our country will die. That will not be the end of the world: as I said, my kids can move to Canada. Yet I prefer America.

Third, do your part. Everybody here should write newspaper op-eds about this—I promise I will in the next couple days—for your leading state newspapers.

Speaking of newspapers, think allies. *The Washington Post* hates *The New York Times* and always has: They are rivals. *The Washington Post* also likes the American state. The *Post* hates Trump, for a mix of good and bad reasons. One good reason is that Trump disdains the American constitutional state. Unlike *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* likes the American state. They want America to continue. After all, American government is their hometown business. Most *Post* reporters are married to (or divorced from) someone who works for government, including the Defense Department. So I would try to make the center-left *Washington Post* an ally to help take down the far left, and factually inaccurate *New York Times*. This battle can only be won by the center left. We on the right and center right have a role. But only the center left has the cultural power to take down 1619, and frankly, they do not like 1619 either. The *Post* has not completely been overtaken by wokeness. Similarly, mainstream historians find 1619 pretty silly, and resent it as nonfactual. Yet they fear being tarred as racist. No more awful thing can happen to a career. So, the question is, how we can lessen fear so resentment can prod people to action.

In part, our strategy must involve scaring the

center-left, and they have reasons to be scared. We should gently persuade Jeff Bezos and *The Washington Post* editorial board that if we do not build support for representative government, the rule of law, and free speech, then it will all go away. *The New York Times* thinks freedom will be replaced by their dictatorship of the woke left. But guess what? Our republic could very easily be replaced by a populist dictatorship from the right. We could become Venezuela, which even *The New York Times* would admit has not worked out so well. Yet American democracy could also become an English-speaking version of the Philippines or Brazil, which while better than Venezuela, are clearly worse than our America. Sensible liberals, and conservatives, do not want either form of populism, and on this we can all be allies.

I'll say one final thing about the *Post*, and much of the center left. During the Great Awakening of the spring, when journalists were fired for being insufficiently reverent toward the Black Lives Matter movement, I don't recall *The Washington Post* firing anybody. Indeed, the *Post* opined that what *The New York Times* was doing was bad journalism. Generally, we have to find natural allies who ideologically we might not agree with 100%. The Cold War was not won by the right. Reagan applied the finishing touches, but he implemented the strategies of Scoop Jackson, Harry Truman, and others from the center left.

Here are a few final ideas. Obviously, *teach the founding*. Use original sources. Also teach race. Until the mid-20th century race did not mean African American; race meant Irish, Italians, Jews, and others. Look at the restrictions mentioned earlier this week on Irish suffrage in Massachusetts in the 1840s. Look at the "No Irish need apply" signs that were once ubiquitous in the U.S. Look at the efforts to destroy Catholic schools in the late 1800s and early 1900s, led by progressive educators, with allies like the Ku Klux

Klan. Once again progressives are attacking religion, attacking Catholic schools and homeschooling just as the Nazis did, just as people who want a united government rather than a free government always do. Yet a united government is not really what the founders wanted. That is not why they gave us three branches. We must teach the founders.

Give every school copies of Thomas Sowell's "The Real History of Slavery." Any billionaires in the audience listening? Fund this.

Have pictures of the founders and the cast of Hamilton both on every school wall. (When I served on the school board I suggested that to my superintendent, and he just did not get it.) The ideas are the same. Who cares about the color of those promoting the ideas? The founders were all white men. What of it? They were white men who, within the context of their day, defended freedom, not slavery. Save for King George, the cast of Hamilton are all people of color, so I suppose Broadway committed an act of racial appropriation. Who cares? It is the ideas that matter, not the color of those voicing them. America was founded on those ideas of freedom, not slavery.

I'll end with one final anecdote from my time on the school board, about finding allies. My biggest allies in the school system were the local teachers' union, who I disagree with nationally on almost everything. But guess what. Our union activists were mainly cranky Advanced Placement teachers who felt that the primary role of our high school should be teaching rather than football. They helped keep the anti-racism curricula out of our schools. When you look for them, you may find allies in the strangest places.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Dr. Maranto. Before we turn to individ-

ual questions from each of you, tell me if I'm correct here in summarizing what I think I've heard from the three of you during your very thoughtful presentations. I think what I hear you saying is this: that if the moral narrative that is the 1619 Project becomes the national self-understanding, it will mean the destruction of America as founded.

Robert Maranto

I would want to leave the country because why would I want to be part of a nation whose defining characteristic is slavery? So I would go.

Tom Lindsay

Doctors Gass and Johnson, any comments?

Jamie Gass

Yeah, I mean, I guess from my point of view a lot of this stuff, I can say I'm from New England, and I can say these kind of things. But I think a lot of the political correctness and a lot of these movements it's a kind of corrupt Puritanism. It tries to peer into people's souls in ways that are incredibly difficult for anyone over time to maintain. And I think there was a short story that Hawthorne did, I think it was called *Earth's Holocaust*, where he talked about this sort of puritanical impulse to throw all these old heraldry and weapons and all these things on this fire. And at the end the lesson is the old world will return. And the fact is that if you apply the kind of criteria that I think many of the folks that are driving this want, no one can stand up to it. There can't be any heroes or heroines because human beings have failings, often great human beings have great failings. And I think that the bottom line is, and I think that my co-panelists touched on this, America is a country based on principles. It's unique in that regard, in the sense that you can learn to subscribe to a variety of

principles, and then you can become an American. And I mean, no one entirely knows how to become French, I guess, but the bottom line is that's why it's so vitally important for us to teach history, wars and all. I think there's a lot of great work that's been done in the last thirty years on slavery. I think there's a difference between history and mythology and kids should learn about slavery. Hugh Thomas, great Thatcherite, great historian of the Spanish Empire, wrote a terrific book in 1997 on the slave trade. It's excellent. And there's a lot of other work. David Brian Davis has done great work on it. And there are some folks at Emory University that are also doing great work on it. And I think that those conversations should be brought to bear. We can't hide from the deficiencies of the country, and we can't hide from the deficiencies sort of sewn into human nature.

But I guess the thing that I ultimately get worried about is that it's a revolution that begins to feed on itself. And I grew up in the western part of Massachusetts around Mount Holyoke College and Smith College. I think Dinesh D'Souza or someone cited that these were one of the early places to have the speech codes and then I think this in some respects is the logical extension of it, but ultimately it's a kind of revolution that consumes itself. And I think that's sort of the one of the central deficiencies and I'm a little more optimistic that, like the French Revolution, the more militant strain of Puritanism will kind of consume itself over time. I think that said, there's a great deal of work to do, because it's dangerous. It's dangerous, because it shrinks the historical imagination, ignores facts and evidence, it deprives kids of a more balanced understanding of what the human experience is. And I think the bottom line is that if there's anything that the founders and enlightenment style education did, it was that it tried to sample widely from all the historical examples, going back to antiquity, to apply reason and facts and evidence to inform good policies. So that's my two cents.

Tom Lindsay

Dr. Johnson, has there ever been a country whose own school system taught its students that their country was evil and not worthy of allegiance? And can a country survive so educated?

Richard Johnson

No. The short answer's no. But ignorance is public enemy number one here. And if we allow ignorance to rule the day, the outcome for America is grim. To characterize the American experiment, and the human experiment, totally based on slavery would be minimizing the greatness of humanity and our nation. And I say humanity first, because we as human beings are forever evolving, always becoming, never to be, but forever evolving. And America, the greatness of America is this evolutionary process it's gone through, and it's going through, not gone through, but going through an evolutionary process. It's forever growing. And to wipe out the history, that portion of history on the map, which would be slavery, would be a disservice to the process.

I'd like to remember Crispus Attucks. I'd like to remember Frederick Douglass. I'd like to remember Booker T. Washington, he's one of my favorites. And I don't always agree with W.E.B. Du Bois, but I'd like to read about Du Bois. Carter G. Woodson, "The Mis-education of the Negro," all the way down to MLK, Martin Luther King in the civil rights movement. One of my favorites during that period is James Farmer, founder of Congress on Racial Equality and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Matter of fact, he spoke at my commencement, and it was a wonderful opportunity to meet him and talk to him. So I don't want to forget the role that they played in this American experiment. Nor do I want to forget the role that Thomas Jefferson played,

George Washington played, Abraham Lincoln, and all of the great men and women throughout our history. That would be a mistake for us.

We've seen the human experience grow far beyond thirteen colonies in the United States of America. We started out with those thirteen colonies, now look at us, and now look at our population. And so I appreciate the wisdom of our founding fathers to create a foundational document like the Constitution that will stand the test of time and be amended as life in our United States continues to grow.

And one of my colleagues, one of the panelists, said earlier, we're going to have to market better. We're going to have to get out there and market the truth. I liked the words that he used. He said objective truth. Not subjective; objective truth. And we're going to have to combat the voices of ignorance with objective truth. And that's going to take a lot of resources. It's going to take a lot of time. It's going to take a lot of commitment. But I think it must be done. Lincoln stared down the barrel of what he would consider to be a civil war approaching. But it must be done.

But I'm very optimistic about it, Tom, I'm extremely optimistic. Because Martin Luther King said something very profound. He said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." And I don't believe that might makes right. I think that right is going to win; at the end of the day, I think that right is going to carry the note at the end of the day. I've seen a lot of changes in the last three years, three and a half years. I've seen some unconventional things that have happened in our system that have caused us to even grow faster and lean further into the Constitution. And I think that's the reason why we see the extreme left coming out attacking the Constitution with all they have right now, because America is now leaning faster and more forward into the Constitution.

And whether you like President Trump or do not like President Trump, he can be credited, his administration can be credited for that mobility in that direction, simply because he's not a conventional politician. He's something different. He's an anomaly. And whatever anomaly comes along, it disrupts the whole system. But what I have seen, he's more of, in his actions, more of a constitutionalist than I've seen in a very long time. And so I believe, just as Jefferson and Adams believed, that we are one nation under God, and I believe that God is a sovereign power. And at the end of the day, my grandmother used to say no more will happen for you or against you, than what God wants to happen. And I believe that He has been in the shadows watching over America. And our Constitution is that sword of freedom, and freedom will prevail at the end of the day. I'm very optimistic about that.

Tom Lindsay

Amen to that. Thank you, Dr. Johnson. We'll now turn to individual questions going back to Dr. Gass. Dr. Gass, tell us in your view, based on your years of experience, what is the state of K-12 history education in this country today?

Jamie Gass

Well, thanks for the question. And in all clarity, I do not have a PhD, but I thank you for that. So this, and I touched on it a little bit in my introductory remarks, I think it's in a desperate situation. And I think that one of the things that I've always admired about NAS and Peter Wood is that I think that they have always understood that a lot of the fights that happen in schools of education and in the K-12 system, are downstream from the original fights that went on in academic departments decades ago. And so one of the things I see in schools of education, which still

train most of the teachers that are in our schools, and increasingly that's even true, unfortunately, in a lot of private and religious schools. There was a time when private religious schools would draw on nuns and priests or they would draw on people that only had an academic undergraduate degree and an academic master's degree, not teaching, and then oftentimes they'd do a sort of crash course in teacher preparation so that they have the basics of pedagogy or classroom management. But I think that in the scheme of things, it's not always that sexy, but the fact is that a lot of the decisions that occur in teacher preparation programs have an enormous, enormous impact on this country, even though I think many people know that schools of education are not the most desirable, or even the best departments within any college or university. And so I think that a lot of energy needs to be put into higher education, holding a light to or a focus on teacher preparation programs, because it's not as though they are just exclusively kind of backwaters, they do have a direct impact on what is taught in the schools, the teachers, the various figures that end up in teachers' unions or trade groups that control a lot of the conversation around it, but unfortunately, it's not in great shape.

One of the formative experiences of my life: I had an opportunity to visit Berlin about two months before the Berlin Wall came down. And I remember traveling the 90 miles or so into Berlin, and having the East German soldiers take you off the bus, and the dogs went over your luggage, and then we got back on the bus and we went into Berlin, and you get to see the Berlin Wall, and it was very real. And then two months later, miraculously, it was over. And so I think things can change very, very quickly. And I think one of the things you find about this moment is that, for good or for ill, parents through seeing what kids are taught on Zoom, or seeing how unresponsive the K-12 system is to what it is that their kids are being taught at all, or getting a chance in a

more close up way to see what it is that our kids are learning or not learning—I think it's in a way shining a light on a lot of deficiencies that a lot of people around K-12 education have observed for many, many decades, and people like E.D. Hirsch have tried to implore policymakers to pay attention to. I think it's one of the reasons why even at the age of 92, he did a piece in *The Wall Street Journal* that highlights and interviews him and he's got a new book coming out that actually addresses a lot of these kinds of topics, gets so much traction and attention because I think that if there's one thing that has been, we've all touched on it before, is that really there isn't as much education in education. There is a willful kind of neglect of knowledge generally. And I think that that is specifically true in history for a variety of different reasons.

But we have a tremendous amount of work to do. There are folks at Heritage and other organizations that are doing really great work, NAS and others, that I think are doing yeoman's service to try to get people to really wake up and see what's going on. At Pioneer we've done that, we did numerous events on every major phase of American history. We had Gordon Wood and James McPherson, we had Taylor Branch, we had Bob Moses, who was head of voter registration in Mississippi for SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee]. We've done events with Sephira Shuttlesworth, the widow of Fred Shuttlesworth, that's on E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. And it's true of those kinds of events, you can get a lot of people to show up, they're interested in it. And I've done a lot of op-eds in Massachusetts. An op-ed about, I don't care whether it's the War of 1812, or the French Revolution, or what have you, it will always run. I think it's one of these places where the parents and the general population actually have a much better sense of it than the policymakers do. And that's one of the reasons why, in spite of the fact that it looks like a dire

situation, I'm more optimistic because I think there is a kind of native common sense about Americans that know that a lot of this stuff is just nonsense and a waste of their kids' time. And it gives them a very jaundiced view of a country that I think people know, in spite of its faults, has kind of just a ton of virtues, in particular in comparison to a lot of other countries in the world. So that's my take.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Jamie. Dr. Johnson, we have a specific question here, which reads, "Does the current American history curriculum address the events leading up to the United States Constitution?"

Richard Johnson

No, I think they need to. I think that there's a definite need. If we're going to study history and understand history, we have to understand what led up to the moment. It's interesting. I'm an old army guy and my oldest son got into a scuffle at school one day, and the vice principal called me over, and I sit down and my son thought that okay, yeah, my dad's here the cavalry has arrived. And so I said to my son, I said, well, tell me what led up to the moment. He said, well we went into the cafeteria, and we sat down to eat, and this other person says something to a friend of mine, and I didn't like what he said to a friend of mine. And so I then intervened, and asked him to step outside, and then pushing and shoving happened. And I said, okay. And so I said to the, to the principal, I think I got the clear picture of what's going on here. And I said to my son, now I'm an old army guy, your dad's an old army guy. So automatically when we go to the dining facility, that's to eat not to be talking. So first of all, you were wrong for talking when you should have been eating. And so you were focused on the wrong thing. And so basically, as we teach American history, we have to lead up to, we have to talk about

the influence of John Locke in terms of the American Constitution. We have to talk about the influence of Blackstone, we have to talk about the influence of Montesquieu. And so we're actually teaching our students the totality of our history. And so I think that's very important for us to do. And I don't think that we do that. We really don't get into teaching just basic constitutional knowledge at all now. And so those of us who are fighting the good fight on the battlefield for objective truth to be heard, I think we must include that in our messaging tone.

Tom Lindsay

Yes. Just to add to your point, America is in a civic literacy crisis. Only 19% of native born Americans under the age of 45 can get even six out of ten questions right on the United States Citizen and Immigration Services Citizenship Test.. Which raises the question, can the American people be expected to defend what they don't even understand? On that happy note, Professor Maranto.

Richard Johnson

Let me say one thing.

Tom Lindsay

Go right ahead.

Richard Johnson

Before you pass the mantle. Crisis breeds opportunity. And that is a charging order for us to get out there and make sure that we are bringing civics education strong, we're bringing it strong and we're taking the fight to them in the street. I just wanted to throw that in before you moved on to the next.

Tom Lindsay

No, I agree. Let me add one thing in response.

There is a national movement across the country that goes under the name of Action Civics. And it starts where we start and that is with the fact that only 19% of native born Americans under 45 have any civic literacy. But Action Civics' defenders argue that the reason for these abysmal results is because we've been doing what former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called, our "grandmother's civics." So, even though those of us who know the field know that in the last fifty years we have abandoned a content based approach to civic education, now the pretended solution is that students will learn better by "doing civics." The Texas Public Policy Foundation just released a research study on action civics. And this may not surprise any of you, but in the final count, it doesn't teach the American Founding. All it really does is teach kids how to protest in favor of left wing causes. And this movement is sweeping the country. On that second happy note, Professor Maranto, you were kind enough to send us a reading list for the audience. Would you like to talk about that a little bit for the audience? Perhaps you want to put it up on the screen?

Robert Maranto

Here is that reading list:

al-Gharbi, M., Goldberg, Z., E. Kaufmann, Salam, R. (2020). *The Great Awakening*, Manhattan Institute, July 30, at <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/the-great-awakening>.

Hirsch, E.D. Jr. (1996). *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*. New York: Doubleday.

Hirsch. (2009). *The Making of Americans*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hirsch. *What Your First Grader Should Know*. Etc.

Maranto, R. (2019). "This Juneteenth, Read 'The Real History of Slavery': Thomas Sowell teaches taboo lessons no longer taught in higher education or pop culture," *Frontpagemagazine.com*, June 16, 2019, at <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/273992/juneteenth-read-real-history-slavery-robert-maranto>.

Maranto, R. (2016). Separate and Unequal: Why do our most progressive institutions have lousy race relations? *Inside Higher Education*, December 19, at <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/12/19/why-even-our-most-progressive-institutions-have-lousy-race-relations-essay>.

Maranto, R. & J. Wai. (2020). "Why Intelligence Is Missing from American Education Policy and Practice, and What Can Be Done About It," *Journal of Intelligence*. Volume 8, issue 1 (January), at <https://www.mdpi.com/2079-3200/8/1/2>.

Moskos, C.C. & Butler, J.S. (1996). *All We Can Be: Black leadership and racial integration the Army way*. New York: Basic Books.

Pluckrose, H. & J. Lindsay. (2020). *Cynical Theories: How activist scholarship made everything about race, gender, and identity*. Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing.

Sowell, Thomas. (2005). The Real History of Slavery, In *Black Rednecks and White Liberals*. Encounter Books.

Timeline of the Abolition of Slavery, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Slavery_abolition.svg

Yancey, George. (2020). Not White Fragility, Mutual Responsibility. *Patheos*, July 27, at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/white-fragility-mutual-responsibility/>.

Let me add that the next time that there's a Republican president, here are my nominees for Secretary of Education, and they are liberal Democrats: Jonathan Haidt, or John McWhorter. We need people who value objective facts and ideological diversity in education. If we have those things, everything else will follow.

There are many successful examples of the right and the reasonable left coming together to embrace obvious policy changes. One is welfare reform. Regular people knew back in the 1960s that the welfare system was failing. In the 1970s I was a blue collar teenager in Baltimore doing factory work, and could see the very negative impacts welfare had on families, especially black families. Finally, by the 90s, defying political correctness, Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich came together to reform welfare. Over the course of decades, such policy breakthroughs can occur. Eventually, even our insulated, thickheaded political and media elites may come to acknowledge basic facts. Another example is the charter school movement, which until recently was more a center-left movement than a conservative movement. Barack Obama, based on his own experiences in Chicago, became very supportive of charters. So think long term, and think of allies.

Regarding the reading list I just posted, I have mentioned several of the works. Here is one on the list which I did not directly mention in my talk. The Manhattan Institute had a wonderful forum on the Great Awokening, which 1619 is part of, partly led by *The New York Times*, which for liberals has increasingly replaced more centrist local newspapers. Here is a second piece I have not mentioned: *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way* by the late Charles Moskos of Northwestern University and John Sibley Butler of the University of Texas, who is still around. Here is why you should

read it. If we eventually come to dismantle many of the frankly ineffective practices like diversity training, those on the left can reasonably ask what we might replace them with. My answer is that we should copy what works rather than what has failed. Regarding race relations, the U.S. Army is likely the organization which has done the best work bringing people together rather than balkanizing them, so if you want a roadmap for increasing interracial understanding, read *All We Can Be*. As I write in an Inside Higher Education essay titled "Separate and Unequal: Why do our most progressive institutions have lousy race relations?" those of us in my sector have done exactly the opposite, with dreadful results for both us, and for society. Similarly, if you read just one thing on race relations this year, make it Baylor Professor George Yancey's *Patheos* essay, "Not White Fragility, Mutual Responsibility," which like *All We Can Be* offers better rather than worse ways to approach race relations. My friend Craig Frisby and I are editing a *Minding the Campus* series on White Fragility, which will include a version of George's essay, and generally explain why woke approaches to race relations are bad for Americans of all races. We will include an essay on 1619.

Robert Maranto

Yes, yes. How on earth can you talk about slavery without talking about Frederick Douglass? It is curricular malpractice.

Tom Lindsay

Well, Jones was savvy in leaving him out. Because if she had left him in, there wouldn't have been a 1619 Project.

Robert Maranto

She had to. And here I must, in part, disagree with Jamie Gass. Jamie sees 1619 as arising out of a mor-

alistic impulse. Some is, to be sure, but some is also to make money. So here is something else we need to do: ask how much do people make doing this? How much money does Robin DiAngelo, the diversity trainer who popularized *White Fragility*, make? Does any of that go to people of color? Incidentally, if you look at her Facebook page, DiAngelo does not seem to actually know any black people. So some of these efforts may be pure PT Barnum, profiteering off people's ignorance.

Tom Lindsay

Back to you, Jamie. Let me ask you a question about the effect on the teaching of history of both the Common Core, as well as the movement toward what is called "social and emotional learning."

Jamie Gass

Great, thanks so much. And we've done a ton of work over the last ten years on Common Core. We did a paper with Sandra Stotsky and now the late Ralph Ketchum, who was the biographer of one volume, biographer of James Madison. I think he was the editor of the Madison papers for a while, as well as the editor of the Franklin papers. And they really took it apart sort of piece by piece, how Common Core was particularly bad for teaching history. David Coleman was the key architect of Common Core, and he's ascended to the College Board where he's had the same kind of negative impact on both the LSAT and APUSH that NAS has done such an effective job of criticizing.

But you know, the fundamental problem, I think—Coleman is a guy who has a lot of the kind of academic pedigree—he went to Yale, he was a Rhodes Scholar. So I think that a lot of DC players and Bill Gates, who is a big funder ... Robert talked a lot about the great largesse that's being thrown at a lot

of these folks. I mean, Coleman is doing quite well, I think, and a lot of his associates in the Common Core have done quite well. And so there's a lot of just good old-fashioned self-interest at work. But the fundamental problem with Common Core, [Coleman has] used this term "cold reading." So you don't read the Gettysburg Address, or Letter from Birmingham Jail, and look at the context of Lincoln consecrating a cemetery in the middle of the war, or MLK is writing the Letter from Birmingham Jail amid all of the tumult and goings on in Birmingham. That you read it in this kind of cold way that ignores context. And that is poison, I think, because anyone who cares about history—anyone who cares about the writings of MLK or Lincoln or anyone else knows that you have to understand the context. Any great document, any great speech, any great letter, the numerous biographies of Frederick Douglass where he talks about almost everyone, then he starts to talk about how terrible it is to not know his birthday, right? You have to forget all that. And that that's one of the reasons why it's particularly bad for teaching history.

And even though it supposedly has a kind of informational text outlook that some people cautiously thought would trend toward nonfiction, I don't think that ten years after Common Core that could be claimed to be true, because the fact is that the English language arts or reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress have been abysmal now for ten years. We've got ten years of data on it. And so on top of all of the ramming it down state's throats through all these extralegal mechanisms and federal overreach, it fundamentally is mediocre. And I think that was one of the cases that Sandy and others tried to make is that the academic quality just isn't very good.

And I'll speak to it, again, how it related to Massachusetts, which, I think, everyone regarded as having the best, not only English standards, but then history

standards that were aligned. So kids would be reading Hawthorne and *Scarlet Letter* while simultaneously learning about Puritanism or Massachusetts colonial history, or they'd be reading *Moby Dick* and then they'd be learning about whaling or ships or what have you. And the same was true of Twain and slavery and reading *Huckleberry Finn*. And so the way Sandy crafted it was that they complemented one another. That the English curriculum and standards were seamlessly interwoven with the history standards. And I think that most historians will tell you that really good history is written in the narrative style. There's something I think very soulless about the way Common Core is taught, which makes it an enormous problem. And I think it will continue to be a problem as long as it's around.

It's why I think that even at this late date, people should be very vocal about the poor academic quality of it. And the poor academic quality has in a way been enshrined by the College Board. And I think that we have to be aware, as I said earlier, that there are people that we've seen as sort of partners over the years in the right leaning world, like the Fordham Institute, who in all appearances seem right leaning, but when push comes to shove, they will side with David Coleman, and they'll side with a weaker quality APUSH, they'll side with weaker quality standards that make it, frankly, a lot easier for these other, I don't think that they would describe them as politically correct. But I think that it makes it a lot easier once you have a work force development or a cold reading or less what I regard as the genuinely liberal arts outlook about education and you've embraced utilitarianism, then I think it's going to just naturally gravitate to what we have now. And in fact, a lot of the high quality academic defenses that you would use to make the case for a curriculum grounded in the liberal arts or primary sources falls on deaf ears, because institutional players have gone to bat for some bad ideas.

Robert Maranto

I will jump in quickly. I think that some of the people on the right and the center left, E.D. Hirsch for example, supported the Common Core as a tactical decision, that if we attained national standards, we could then later fix those standards. That was not crazy. The idea had some potential for academically improving a system which had been largely about babysitting since the 1918 publication of *the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, which I would urge everyone to read. The academic parts of the system were held together for three generations by intelligent teachers who cared about academic content. Alas, those teachers have now been gone for two generations, not gone from the planet, but gone from teaching. They are doing more lucrative, more respected occupations.

So the question is how to change this over time, know that it will be a 30 year battle. We need more people like Sandra Stotsky, who pushed Massachusetts into having real standards for teacher certification, by prodding and bullying the state education bureaucracy for years. Sandy is now in her 80s, so we must ask, where are this generation's Sandy Stotskys? We must also support the school choice movement. Where parents get to choose what they want, they tend to choose academically superior options like Boys' Latin of Philadelphia, and the Basis and Great Hearts schools in Arizona and Texas. And here is another thought. If i619 can spread like a virus, why not Core Knowledge, or some other curriculum of quality? Where is Peter Thiel on this? He could put down \$100 million and make it happen. Some billionaires and media moguls may actually see it as in their interests to continue America rather than split it apart. Where are they?

Tom Lindsay

Thank you. Dr. Johnson, we have a specific question here about teaching American history. What, in your

view, is the greatest misconception associated with Article One, Section Two of the U.S. Constitution?

Richard Johnson

The greatest misconception there is the three fifths compromise. You know, basically, most people have heard that the three fifths compromise meant that America saw black people as being three fifths of a human being. But there again, without reading Article One, Section Two, individuals would not know that the Constitution never spoke to anybody as being property. It basically points out that these are different persons. And then if you break it down, prior to the Constitution the way that the colonies basically assessed tax at that time was done based on the value of land and not on population. And so when they brought forward the Constitution they said this is how we're going to set up our government, it's going to be based on population, how we will choose or apportion for powers in the House of Representative, seats in the House of Representatives. And so the South said, we want to count all of our folks, all of our people, and at that that time about 20% of America was slaves, and then about 40% of the South. That would have given the South the larger power portion in the new House of Representatives. So the North said, then we're going to set your tax based on that proportionate. And so they said, that means we're going to pay more money than everybody. And so they said, wait a minute, then we'll only count out of every five individuals that are not free people we will only count three, three out of five. And so then the South said, we're not going to be as strong as we would like to be, which if they account every person that was enslaved at that time in the South, slavery never would have ended because the South would have been so overwhelmingly powerful. And so they said, we'll give the South a little bit of a tax break, it was called the three fifths compromise. And it was to basically set a portion based on popula-

tion to deal with the question of how many representatives a state would have and then how much tax a state would be assessed. Nothing to do with the humanity of a person. And I think that is the biggest misconception out there.

I've had that argument with some constitutional scholars in the African American community. And they said, what about them counting us as three fifths of a person? Well, no, every person in the Constitution is counted as a whole person. It's now how much are we going to assess you in terms of taxes, and then how much we're going to credit you for in terms of political power in the House of Representatives. So I think that that is the biggest misconception and a lot of people go out and say well I hate such and such, I hate the Constitution because it never counted me as a person. Well, that's not necessarily the truth. And matter of fact it's not a truth. And so if we're able to teach the truth objectively, I think that would clear up a lot of this contempt that people have for the American Constitution and for America itself.

But we have to get back in, we have to go back to the future. Kind of like the movie *Back to the Future*, we have to go back to the future and start teaching the things that we were teaching in terms of civics and history, true history, years ago, seems like centuries now. But it's not a model that we have not embraced before in the past. And most people don't want to go back to the past. Let's say you don't want to bring everything forward from the past, but there are some things we do want to keep. And there are some things that are valuable. I like the Booker T. Washington model for education. You know, Booker T felt like, hey, it's great, liberal arts and sciences are great, but it's also great to learn how to pour a foundation. It's also great to learn a trade or a skill, not an either/or, but a both/and. He tells one of his students, I want you to learn how to be a poet, but I also want you to learn how to go back home and

help build your town and help renovate your town because everybody needs a bed to sleep in and shelter to be under. And so those are the things that I'd like to see move forward in education. The foundation of education was designed to create a well informed and highly skilled and well-educated workforce in America, but it didn't just mean plowing fields and building buildings and making crops. It also meant science; it also meant liberal arts; it also meant new technology. And so we call career technology, education.

So admit all those things. That's what America needed then, and that's what America needs now. And, again, I'm very optimistic about getting the truth out there to the common man and woman. But I think that we have a heck of a fight ahead of us. And I don't take the teachers' union lightly. I mean, my good friend, and Robert's good friend, Dr. Paige, Dr. Rod Paige, I did my internship, my doctoral internship under Dr. Rod Paige. And he wrote a book that specifically addresses the teachers' union, and their stance on education as a stumbling block or hurdle that we would have to approach and get over.

Robert Maranto

That was "The War on Hope," right? That's a great book.

Richard Johnson

Exactly. Right. So I think that fight is very real. And I think it's pervasive and we have to take it head on, and with the truth as wind at our back in terms of fighting this battle. But we all have to come together. I agree that we do need to make allies and find people who are of like mind and convince those who are on the fence to come over our way. But it's going to take a lot of marketing. We're up against hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of folks on the other side.

But again we have to believe that right at the end of the day is going to win out, and we'll be successful in this fight. I'm confident.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Dr. Johnson. We have a question from the audience here addressed to all three of you. And it says this, and I see Dr. Maranto typed in an answer, but I want to find out also from the other two. The question is this, regarding getting high quality teachers for lower grades, would you agree that progressive ideas and approaches in education regarding discipline, for example, have made grammar school teaching a difficult and even an undesirable job? I know highly qualified people who had a lot to give, but were discouraged by the chaos that many schools allow and expect teachers to tolerate. And then our questioner concludes by saying progressive ideas are making even college teaching less and less desirable.

Jamie Gass

I'll take a crack at that. Yeah. So it's a great question. And I think it really does, in some respects, cut to the core of what ails public education, at least in this country is that E.D. Hirsch's name has been used a lot, but he, although he certainly is more left leaning, has always been for thirty years now at least a real critic of progressive education. I come from a family of educators, my wife is a teacher, and I don't know why people go into it because it has become so cumbersome between the politics and all of the bureaucracy and the poor quality of the ideas that you find in many of the schools of education. I think it's always been and will always remain heroic work. It's enormously important, because the fact is that it shapes the future of the children and the country. But you've seen this with all these iterations of top down federal initiatives. It could be Common Core, it could be social emotional learning, it could be school

to work. I mean, there's all these, they take children and teachers in schools guardrail to guardrail every few years with these new fads, but I think that the worst one and the most enduring one has been progressive education. Because the fact is that even though we're spending 700-800 billion annually, and we have all these enormous federal efforts, the independent NAEP data Nation's Report Card is telling us that it's not working. And I think that the reason why is that the water in the aquarium is terrible. And the water in the aquarium is progressive education. It just lacks substance, it lacks humanity. And I think there's a lot of teachers just that soldier on, even though the bureaucracy is growing around them.

All of the ideas are poor quality, but I think it's headed—I mean I remember, and this is many years ago, and someone like Peter Wood might remember when John Silber, the very shy and retiring guy who was the president of Boston University, briefly was the chair of the Board of Education in Massachusetts. One of the first things he did was bring the British philosopher, Roger Scruton, over to the school of education. And then he brought all of the senior level bureaucrats at the Department of Education over to listen to a speech or lecture by Roger Scruton. And he started off the speech saying that basically John Dewey had ruined Western civilization. And that's a little bit of an over-exaggeration, but you should have seen the look on people's faces. But I think the fact is that the evidence kind of shows that one of the central problems in American education has been this commitment to this constructivism and hands-on learning. And all these sort of, we can even call them intellectual offshoots or byproducts of progressive education, that just don't work. They don't teach grammar, they don't teach a lot of academic substance. And children need these things.

And I think that one of the things that should be the biggest failure, and the other panelists touched on it, is that in urban districts in this country, 30% of the

kids aren't graduating. The ones that do are really well below grade level. And this is a national tragedy, and it's largely inflicted by poor quality progressive education and a commitment to it. And I think that the evidence from some really good quality Catholic schools, really good sort of no nonsense charter schools, many of them are these Hirsch schools and others, is that when you focus kids and teachers and learning on academic substance, lo and behold, they like it. Whereas the kids are kind of voting with their feet when 30% of the kids don't graduate. What they're saying to the system is that you've lost us as an audience. And I just think that whether it's the founder's and the founding documents, or Abigail Adams, or Sojourner Truth, or Frederick Douglass, or Churchill's speeches, or fill it in, that stuff is always going to be more compelling to kids because it teaches them about a common humanity. It teaches them about enduring principles that have lasted for millennia. And I just think that progressive education is such a thin gruel, our kids really deserve far better, and the most vulnerable kids deserve far better.

Robert Maranto

Let me disagree, in part. I spent the last twenty-five years now doing fieldwork in schools, plus 5 years on a school board, and 12 years on a charter school board. I think that progressive education can be quite good. Many great charter schools like the Charter School of Sedona are excellent Montessori schools, and the Montessori model is progressive in that children do have considerable control over their learning. If you have motivated kids and highly knowledgeable teachers to guide those kids, this can work very well; but for working class kids like me, it could be a disaster.

In *The Academic Achievement Challenge*, the late Jeanne Chall showed that when you attempt child centered pedagogy in working class communities, it rarely fits

the culture. Accordingly, I think that the problem is that when we try to impose a model that works in some places with some kids, on everybody, it usually fails. I would also say that if you go to the average school, it is not terribly progressive. Teachers like order and stability, often for good reason. My local teachers' union leader once pointed out that on the secondary level along over a four year period we had 23 separate initiatives that were adopted, and then dropped, usually without even being evaluated; so teachers did not take any of them seriously. Administrators would do initiatives to pad their resumes. When you go into effective schools, particularly in low income areas, most of them are not run in a progressive way.

An even more important factor is that we lack sufficient numbers of teachers with the talent to bring out the best in both our high performing kids, and our disadvantaged kids. When you look at measures of intelligence, among college majors, elementary ed majors do not excel. I have the data on their SATs and ACTs in all 50 states. Generally, people go into teaching, particularly at the elementary level, because they like schools as they are, which is content free, and very social, very into athletics. The people now going into teaching like schools as they are, not as you and I might like them to be. They are neither progressive, nor supportive of serious academic content. I should add that they are on the whole very nice people, who work fairly hard. They are just not into academic content. Unless over time we get a higher level of what my economist friends call human capital going into teaching, we will have trouble getting schools to undermine rather than underscore fake news. Relatedly, my own school district, likely the best in my state, has in recent years turned down teaching applicants who had experience teaching and had college degrees from places like Yale, Cornell, Columbia, Berkeley, and instead hired people from, say, University of Arkansas, or Arkansas Tech, or

University of Central Arkansas. Now, why would we do this? Because the teachers educated at fancy colleges might ask questions. They might not be "team players."

Accordingly, I see educational leadership is actually more of a culprit in the human capital mess than the teachers' unions. I mean our union chief actually wanted to hire smarter teachers.

Richard Johnson

Let me just jump right in. I just want to add one thing. Tom, I really favor the Dallas model that we use here in Texas and House Bill Three. Basically, dealing with the teachers and they use the model that was an old military model. See, when you're in the military and you volunteer to go into combat zones, you get a little hazard pay, you don't get just your regular pay. And so basically, what we've done here in Texas, and we'll be watching this model over the next few years, is create an A-Team scenario to go into schools, and not just schools but school districts that are experiencing a high failure rate. And then those teachers and those administrators are getting a little bit more on to their pay. The pay is higher. Because prior to that it didn't matter whether you were in a great school district that was doing well, or you were in a failing school district, you all still got the same amount of money. And so what's happened now is with House Bill Three, they've said let's incentivize some of our A-list teachers, some of our special forces so to speak, to go into some of our schools that that are experiencing chronic failure, like a Wheatley in Houston or a Kashmir in Houston. Kashmir was on the failing list for about 14 years. And I know one of our legislators, his biggest complaint was he went over and asked why were they doing so poorly in math, and in over 10 years they had not had a certified math teacher? Because why would you leave a school or a school district that's doing very well and go into

a low income area where you go into a failing school, and get the same amount of pay? And so what the state of Texas has done now, what House Bill Three is saying is let's incentivize some of those great, those good teachers, those well experienced teachers, those highly successful teachers, and incentivize them to go back into schools where we need them, we need help. And we're waiting to see how that works. It worked well in Dallas, they created the Dallas model, showed great data in terms of schools lifting themselves out of IR and moving into the academic success range. And I think that that needs to happen. I was saying that years ago, just simply being in the military, I was like, what would incentivize me to go into the combat zone if I'm not gonna get anything extra? I could just stay right here and be good. Everything will be all right. And the same thing was happening with the teachers, and I was glad to see that the Texas Legislature picked up on that and followed that Dallas model, and I'm looking for great things to happen out of it.

Tom Lindsay

Well, that is a good note to end on. I'm sure I speak for our entire audience when I thank all three of you for your very thoughtful comments. Before we say goodbye I want to tell our audience that our next session in this conference will be tomorrow at 11am Eastern Time. Robert Paquette, who is the President and Executive Director of the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization will be giving a presentation called "What Made American Slavery Distinctive?" Look forward to seeing you all tomorrow. And thank you again for attending today.

Good afternoon. My name is Tom Lindsay and I work at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Welcome to our panel. It is part of our week-long series

American Ideals

Kevin R.C. Gutzman, Jason Ross, Joseph Fornieri, and Tom Lindsay

on the 1619 Project. Our panel today is titled American Ideals. And to discuss this important subject, we are honored to have three experts in this area. Let me introduce them. First, we have Professor Kevin Gutzman, who is Professor of History at Western Connecticut State University. Next, we will hear from Professor James Ross, who teaches political science at the Helms School of Government at Liberty University. And last but by no means least Professor Joseph Fornieri, who teaches political science at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Welcome to all three of you, and thank you for participating in this panel. Before we proceed, I want to tell the members of our audience that there is a Q&A section here on your zoom panel and also a chat section. If you have a question for any of the panelists, please put that in the Q&A section and we will try to get to it.

Beginning with you, Professor Gutzman. I want to read to you and to the audience as a prompt a quote from the 1619 Project and then ask you to respond. The 1619 Project says:

The United States is a nation founded on both an ideal and a lie. Our Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776, proclaims that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. But the white men who drafted those words, did not believe them to be true for the hundreds of thousands of black people in their midst.

Professor Gutzman?

Kevin Gutzman

Well, I could write a substantial essay on the question whether the Declaration founded a nation besides declaring independence. Leaving that aside, I dispute the rest of Hannah-Jones' claim. I take issue with the balance of her assertion, particularly in

relation to the congressional committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence. They did not intend for blacks to be excluded from the claim that 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, and that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. The drafting committee's five members had remarkably extensive records of significant official action in this connection. I will consider their anti-slavery records from the least to the most significant.

The first of the five, New York's Robert R. Livingston, is known to history as Chancellor Livingston. Even on a committee with a Virginia Randolph, Thomas Jefferson, Livingston was the bluest-blooded of the group. And his title reminds us of his quarter-century-long tenure as New York's chief equity judge. As chancellor, Livingston, under John Jay's New York Constitution of 1777, served as a member of the state's Council of Revision, the committee chaired by the governor charged with the legislative veto power. In that context, Livingston in 1785 opposed a bill to abolish New York slavery. Perhaps surprisingly, Livingston voted for the veto on anti-slavery grounds. It said that, "No Negro, mulatto, or mustee should have the legal vote in any case whatsoever," which besides foreclosing the possibility of voting for people freed under the bill would have deprived black New Yorkers already free of a right they already enjoyed. Livingston is recorded having said that such people could not "be deprived of those essential rights of holding office and voting without shocking the principle of equal liberty, which every page in that New York Constitution labors to enforce." In further explanation of his opposition to the abolition bill, Livingston explained that it excluded these people from representation, "necessarily laying the foundation of an aristocracy of

the most dangerous and malignant kind, rendering power permanent and hereditary in the hands of persons who deduce their origins from white ancestors only, though these at some future period should not amount to a fiftieth part of the people."

The second of the drafting committee's members, Benjamin Franklin, though earlier in life seemingly having no objection to slavery, came to oppose it under the circumstances of the Revolution. So, for example, he said in response to Lord Mansfield's monumental decision in *Somerset* that, "The air of England is too free for a slave to breathe," that one of the great English sins against America was the introduction of slavery into its colonies. Franklin also accepted the ideas in the 1770s that slave importation should end "immediately," and that abolition should come "in time." By the time the Philadelphia Convention began in 1787, Franklin had accepted the presidency of the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and the Relief of Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, which was organized by Philadelphia Quakers years before to help bring slavery to an end. As that group's president, Franklin presented to the new Federal Congress in January 1790 a petition for slavery's abolition. "Mankind are all formed," it said, "by the same mighty being, like objects of his care, and equally designed for the enjoyment of happiness, and Congress should secure the blessings of liberty to the people of the United States without distinction of color." If the congressmen missed the allusions to the Declaration of Independence in that passage, not yet as famous a document as it is now, we of course do not. Representative James Jackson of Georgia responded to the petition in the house that the Bible sanctioned slavery, and besides Lowcountry plantation labor required someone able to perform hard toil. Franklin, the old man who had made a start as a teenage boy indentured to his older brother and writing newspaper spoofs, responded to Jackson with an anonymous piece in a Philadelphia

newspaper. In the piece, an Algerian Grandee, after beginning, "God is great and Muhammad is His Prophet," justified enslavement of infidel (that is, European and American Christian) sailors by saying that someone had to do the hard, hot work of tending the crops and the scut work of the cities. "The men not used to slavery would not perform such labor," said the Algerian, "their lands would lose much of their value and the economy would fail if Algiers were deprived of slaves." There was the entire American pro-slavery argument in all its glory. Thus did Ben Franklin close out his public career.

Roger Sherman of Connecticut, too, had an important career as an anti-slavery statesman. Sherman's Connecticut Compromise in the Philadelphia convention came naturally to a politician from his state, which at the time had one thirteenth of the country's population, thus would have an equal share in a house apportioned by population or apportioned on the basis of state equality. He also pushed throughout the convention for limits on federal power, which helps to explain why he did not side with those who called for more anti-slavery provisions in the Constitution. Besides, he said, the current was running against slavery, which had been banned or put on the road to extinction in several states. We do not know what position he would have taken had he foreseen that Hartford's Eli Whitney would invent a cotton gin that made slavery far more profitable west of the Low country than it otherwise would have been, but we do know that Sherman, throughout his career, opposed slavery consistently. One leading argument of Mark David Hall's recent biography of Sherman is that Sherman's Calvinism strongly influenced his statesmanship, and this seems especially important in relation to slavery. Sherman wrote in 1784, the year that Connecticut adopted its gradual emancipation act, that, "God has made of one blood all nations of the earth. They have determined the bounds of their habitation." This, Hall

notes, was the passage of Scripture most commonly adduced at that time in support of the idea of racial equality. Whether it was or not, Sherman "consistently opposed slavery, because he believed all humans were made in the image of God and must be treated with dignity."

Though his role in their passage is unknown, Sherman sat in the Connecticut Legislature not only when it passed its gradual emancipation act, but when it passed acts banning slave imports and freeing a slave seized along with the rest of a Loyalist's estate rather than keeping or selling him, as well as when it passed a law smoothing the process of emancipating slaves. Hall judges that we may infer the chairman supported these laws. Sherman also participated in the General Assembly session to pass legislation empowering selectmen, the Connecticut analogues of town councilmen, to certify the likelihood that a slave would be able to support himself after manumission and thus enable that slave's master to free his servant without incurring liability for supporting him in case he proved incapable of supporting himself. This would facilitate manumission. Too, Sherman was on the Superior Court when it decided that an owner who had freed his slave had acted rightly in doing so after the owner had determined him to be a Christian, and his slavery thus unlawful.

Perhaps the most interesting instance of Sherman's acting against slavery came in the Superior Court case of *Arabus vs. Ivers* in 1784. Sherman and his three judicial brethren heard Jack Arabus demand a writ of *habeas corpus* on the ground that Ivers had no right to hold him, he being free. Ivers asserted Jack was a slave, but Jack said that he had, with Ivers' consent, been enlisted in the Continental Army in 1777. As General Washington had ordered that "the free Negroes who have served faithfully in the army at Cambridge may be re-enlisted there, but no others,"

Jack said Ivers' consent to Jack's enlistment amounted to manumission. Hall points out that though he had enlisted, Jack had not served "at Cambridge," and so did not fall under Washington's order. Some other slaves who had served in the Army during the Revolution later were freed by government, but some were not. As Hall concludes, Sherman and his learned colleagues "must have been familiar with these complications. And so we may conclude that they consciously pushed the boundaries of the law in order to reach a just decision"—in other words, to free Jack. In another case, Sherman and four judicial brethren ruled that as he had been born of a free woman, a native of the land, a deceased Indian man had been eligible to establish residence in Coventry, and thus that town's responsibility to support his widow and orphans.

John Adams of Massachusetts played an even more important role against slavery than Livingston, Franklin, or Sherman. Adams served as chief draftsman of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, today the world's oldest written constitution in continuous use. Lifting language from George Mason's committee draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776 and reworking it slightly, Adams included in the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 a statement that "all men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness." An important change Adams made was to omit "of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity," a clause which had been inserted into Virginia's version of this provision to make clear that slaves, who were not parties to any social compact, thus were not protected by the Old Dominion's constitution—specifically, by the

assertion that all men are, by nature, equally free and independent.

A recent account of Adams' life, Richard Bernstein's *The Education of John Adams*, says, "Adams from an early point in his legal practice, while Massachusetts remained a British colony, appeared in freedom cases on the side of slaves seeking freedom." He notes that in Massachusetts, "slavery did not start to erode until in the 1780s Massachusetts courts found it a violation of the state's 1780 constitution, written by Adams. By 1800, not a single slave lived in Massachusetts."

Finally, we come to Virginian Thomas Jefferson. The most recent emerita editor of his papers, Barbara Oberg, said that Jefferson took more significant steps against slavery than anyone else of his generation, so we cannot in our sparse time consider them all. I will hit the highlights. First, in 1780, he argued in a legal case that, "Under the law of nature, all men are born free." Second, he drafted a 1777 bill that would have enabled any slave taken to Virginia thereafter to become free, "upon their taking the oath of fidelity to the Commonwealth." Third, he drafted a bill in 1784, which failed by one vote, that would have excluded slavery from all western states—that is, states west of the Appalachians. Fourth, he wrote the most influential anti-slavery book of its age, perhaps of any age, including passages expressing hope that his inklings about blacks' mental endowments were wrong, the candor of which is underscored by the fact that he hired Benjamin Banneker to be a surveyor in the District of Columbia and the fact that he said his Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge can be read as applying to black children. Jefferson as president also called on Congress to pass, and himself signed, the law banning slave imports at the earliest constitutionally permitted moment. Sixth, he encouraged numerous younger men to oppose slavery, one of whom took the lead in ensuring slavery remained illegal in Illinois. And

seventh, he wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, or as he called it, “my political philosophy, &c.,” which included, first, the famous statement that “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal,” and secondly, a lengthy passage decrying the international slave trade as barbaric and not befitting a Christian prince. Actually, there are several more acts in Jefferson’s career that are of a similar kind to these. So, I think it fair to say that Nikole Hannah-Jones is mistaken: the men who drafted the Declaration of Independence believed what they said. In 1776, slavery was common. The American Revolution put it on a road to extinction both here and abroad. The principles to which Americans were committed led to this outcome. The ongoing calumny against America’s revolutionary founders, who were born into a world in which slavery was widely accepted and played prominent parts in putting it, at least insofar as Western civilization is concerned, on the road to extinction, might at first have been thought to be based on error. Now, however, with several prominent experts in my field having come out against the 1619 Project’s chief claims as false, the motives leading its authors to persist in making those claims seem clear enough. The 1619 Project, to borrow an old saying, is in the streets. We of the present owe it to generations past and future to ensure that this attack on America is, as it should be, “hooted down the page of history.” Thank you.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Professor Gutzman, for that thoughtful rejoinder. And just one thing I want to add before we turn to Professor Ross, I know that after receiving a number of criticisms from leading historians, many of them of the left, Nikole Hannah-Jones finally responded that the 1619 Project is not a work of history but a work of journalism. I’m not sure what that means. It seems to mean that historians are bound by

the truth whereas journalists can lie. But if you have a more generous interpretation, I’d be happy to hear it.

Next, Professor Ross, let me read to you a quote from the 1619 Project and then ask you to respond. The 1619 Project says, “when it came time to draft the Constitution, the framers carefully constructed a document that preserved and protected slavery without ever using the word. In the texts in which they were making the case for freedom to the world, they did not want to explicitly enshrine their hypocrisy, so they sought to hide it.” Professor Ross?

Jason Ross

Thank you, Tom. And good afternoon to everybody. I’d like to thank you all for tuning in. I’d also like to thank the Texas Public Policy Foundation and the National Association of Scholars, especially David Randall, for organizing this conversation. I appreciate your urgency in carrying on with this event despite COVID and lockdown. But mostly I appreciate your urgency in addressing this historical moment. I think our organizers know and I hope we all know who are watching that we are here today because the 1619 Project reveals a loss of faith in the American experiment and constitutional self-government. The 1619 Project’s central teaching is that our democracy’s founding ideals were false when they were written. It is not an exaggeration to say that if the 1619 Project succeeds, the American experiment will fail.

One part of the case the 1619 Project makes against America’s constitutional democracy is to claim that our Constitution was and was intended to be pro-slavery. The 1619 Project did not invent this interpretation of the Constitution. In fact, it dates back at least to the early 1840s when it was made most forcefully by the radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. He is infamous for burning a copy of

the Constitution during a speech on Independence Day. His critique of the Constitution was forgotten for a time when Americans were ready to heal after the Civil War, but it was recovered in the 1960s by a historian and a new left activist, one who closely collaborated with Howard Zinn. The resurrected Garrisonian critique of the Constitution as pro-slavery slowly gained traction in the academy in the latter part of the 20th century. And over the last generation, it has become accepted by historians as the central truth of American history. It was only a matter of time before the narrative our historians were spinning about the evil intent of our founders made it into the public square

So I've been asked today to address this argument of whether the Constitution was intended to be pro-slavery. An obvious place I might start is in the Constitutional Convention, but this has been done many times before. And I believe the more important and less known story lies elsewhere. So I want to start with the delegates to the Constitutional Convention as they returned home to support its ratification. They had been through eighty eight grueling days of contentious deliberation; the convention almost broke apart multiple times, many delegates walked out before the end. Those who remained shared at least one tacit agreement: they were all more or less equally unhappy with the outcome. But with few exceptions, none wanted to repeat the experience of a long and contentious debate, and none held out any hope that a second convention would produce results they found any more favorable. They had done their best and they would make the best of what they had done.

Another tacit agreement they shared is that none of them said anything during the ratification debate to indicate they believed the Constitution was intended to be pro-slavery. Instead, many Federalists from free states praised the prospect of a congressional power

to ban the slave trade that had not existed before. They called it one of the beauties of the Constitution. They wished the power could take effect before 1808, but they did legitimately believe that banning the slave trade would lay the foundation for ending slavery altogether. Federalists and free states also boasted that the Constitution provided for a tax on the importation of slaves. This tax, they argued, may amount to at least a partial prohibition on that traffic. The power to tax of course is the power to destroy. So delegates who returned to slave states to defend the Constitution had to address this question about the security of their so called property and slave. There was no record in any of these ratification debates of claims that a right to property in slaves was recognized as absolute in the Constitution or that the Constitution was in any other way pro-slavery. Instead, in South Carolina, the delegates were sharply criticized for failing to protect South Carolina's slave property. General Pinckney simply said, "We have made the best terms for the security of this property it was in our power to make." And in Virginia, when Patrick Henry claimed that the fugitive slave clause was no security at all for slave property, Madison did not dispute him.

Many delegates to the federal convention went on to serve in the first Congress. None of them gave any indication there that the Constitution was intended to be pro-slavery. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Convention delegate Benjamin Franklin was then serving as president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. The society petitioned Congress to use "the full extent of your power to mitigate the evils of the slave trade." Quoting from the preamble to the Constitution, the petition explained that many important powers are vested in Congress for promoting the welfare and securing the blessings of liberty to the people of the United States. The society argued that these blessings of liberty ought rightfully to be administered without distinction of

color. Clearly, Franklin did not believe that the Constitution was intended to be pro-slavery. Nor did James Madison, who was also a member of that first Congress. He argued that “if there is anything within the federal authority to restrain violations of the rights of mankind, it will tend to the honor of this community to attempt a remedy and it is a proper subject for our discussion.” To underscore his point, he asked, “if Congress did have powers that could guard against such violations is there any person of humanity that would not wish to do so?” Roger Sherman was president in that first Congress and had also been at the Constitutional Convention. He agreed that it was urgent that Congress consider the Quaker petitions in order to ascertain what are the powers of the general government to regulate the slave trade. Finally, Elbridge Gerry, also a delegate to the federal convention, though one who did not sign the Constitution, and also a member of the first Congress, agreed that nothing would excuse the general government for not exerting itself to prevent as far as they constitutionally could the evils resulting from the slave trade.

In the first Congress, then, we see the first efforts to find the anti-slavery potential within the Constitution. But we also see the first efforts to define it as pro-slavery. South Carolina’s William Loudon Smith, who had not been at the convention, claimed that the Constitution was “an implied compact between the northern and southern people that no steps should be taken to injure the property of the latter or to disturb their tranquility.” An implied compact, he said. Smith’s argument was rejected by the House, but it would soon return.

In the meantime, Congress read and debated these Quaker petitions and determined that it did have powers to regulate the slave trade, if not to prohibit it. Congress passed a law in 1794 to regulate the slave trade, including banning the exportation of slaves.

Congress strengthened this law in 1800, making it illegal for U.S. citizens to engage in the international slave trade, and allowing for the seizure of any vessel violating federal laws restricting the slave trade. In 1803, Congress passed another law prohibiting the importation of slaves into any state that had made the slave trade illegal. And finally, in 1807, Congress banned the importation of slaves altogether. This ban took effect on January 1, 1808, as early as permitted by the Constitution.

The first Congress, with several members who had served as delegates to the Constitutional Convention, clearly did not believe the Constitution was intended to be pro-slavery. Nor did the subsequent congresses, which passed all of these statutes to limit the slave trade. This modern anti-slavery movement of the late 18th century was joined by a more radical abolitionist movement in the early 19th century. But even these abolitionists did not claim the Constitution was pro-slavery. This included the most radical among them, William Lloyd Garrison. At the start of my talk, I introduced Garrison as the first and most forceful advocate of the view that the Constitution was pro-slavery. But early in his career, he wholly embraced the view that the spirit of the Constitution was anti-slavery. In his first public address about slavery Garrison continued to extol the Constitution for its anti-slavery powers. He noted that Congress had power over the District of Columbia, and thus could ban slavery and the slave trade there. More, as he cofounded the New England Anti-slavery Society, the society thought that anti-slavery sentiment was, “the very genius of our country, the whole American people ought to be an anti-slavery society. The declaration of 76 requires it. The letter and spirit of our Constitution require it.” There is nothing here of the pro-slavery Constitution.

Now Garrison and the abolitionists made provocative arguments and they made these arguments provocatively. Many did not want to hear them and

sought to silence them. Some did so using legislative tricks to deny their petitions from being heard. Others resorted to physical violence against them. But the most respectable way of silencing the abolitionists, without getting one's hands dirty, was simply to repeat the claim made in the first Congress by South Carolina's William Smith, that the Constitution implied a compact between North and South, and that according to this compact, the South would not have joined the Union if it could not enjoy its claims to property and slaves fully and without disturbance. This argument grew increasingly common and by the mid-1830s, the abolitionists found themselves confronting it at every turn. Garrison and his colleagues were called before the Massachusetts legislature to defend themselves against the charge they were violating this compact with the southern states. The abolitionists testified that "nowhere in this Constitution do we find any such compact or compromise or stipulation as has been described." One of this group, Samuel May, complained that everywhere he went, he heard people talking about the Constitution as a compact that required silent acceptance of slavery. This argument, he said, was flippantly iterated by thousands who had never read the Constitution of the United States. To combat their ignorance, he invented the pocket constitution.

Nathaniel Rogers, who edited an abolitionist newspaper, wrote that if the Constitution's framers had made a pro-slavery compromise, they did not succeed in reducing their compromise to writing. Instead, he argued that the written Constitution was a warranty deed of universal liberty, and that it promised equal and absolute freedom. The argument that the Constitution was a compact requiring silent acceptance of slavery was based on speculation about what the framers might have intended. But anti-slavery interpretations of the Constitution were based on the letter of the Constitution and the spirit behind it.

And importantly, they looked into the letter and spirit of the Constitution as a whole, including the Bill of Rights, which, as we recall, was added well after the Constitutional Convention, and without any knowledge of any secret pro-slavery bargains that some alleged may have occurred there.

In light of the whole text of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, abolitionists argued that one of the fundamental principles of the Constitution was to protect due process. This was the principle they argued should apply even to blacks, even to those alleged to have escaped from Southern bondage. For this reason, opponents of slavery began to encourage states to establish due process protections of this kind. They had success in this task, but many of these state laws were soon challenged in courts. The New Jersey Supreme Court upheld one such law. The judge in that case opined that Congress did not have any enumerated powers to regulate slavery, and that as a result, such regulation should be left to state governments. Garrison took comfort in this ruling. He may have read too much into it in concluding that by the Constitution of the United States those slaves can lawfully exist in this country. But he did hope the constitutionality of these laws would be upheld on appeal to the Supreme Court.

Opponents of slavery had reason to believe they were making progress in their legal strategy to protect the due process right of blacks and in their rhetorical strategy of defining the Constitution as anti-slavery in principle. Their strategy was gaining momentum when in 1836 James Madison passed away. Word circulated that he left behind a complete account of the debates from the Constitutional Convention. Abolitionists were eager to obtain Madison's notes to build their case that the Constitution was intended to be anti-slavery. The first book by an abolitionist defending the Constitution as anti-slavery was published in 1841. It had mostly been written by the

time Madison's notes became available in 1840, but evidently the author believed that the notes shed enough light on the intent of the framers regarding the fugitive slave clause that he added a section to his book based on Madison's notes. That section showed how Madison's notes had revealed for the first time that the fugitive slave clause had entered the Constitution indirectly. South Carolina delegates had attempted to add a phrase to what would become the Constitution's extradition clause. They proposed adding the phrase that fugitive slaves and servants would be delivered up like criminals. Madison revealed that the convention rejected this proposal outright. Madison's notes show that South Carolina tried again, changing the phrase fugitive slaves and servants to any person bound to service or labor in any of the United States. This seemed to demonstrate that the framers explicitly chose not to acknowledge slavery in the Constitution, but to show instead that slavery was merely a legacy of state laws. Madison's notes showed further that the phrase "delivered up like criminals" was replaced with "delivered up to the person justly claiming their service or labor" and that phrase was altered further to remove the word justly and to call for the persons in question to be delivered on claim of the party to whom such labor or service may be due. The conclusion that was drawn from this drafting history, again, newly revealed by the Madison papers, was that the framers intended to allow for due process protections for blacks alleged to have been escaped from bondage.

This whole legal strategy of defining the Constitution as anti-slavery in its spirit and as demanding due process rights for escaped slaves and other blacks, came to a head in the 1842 Supreme Court case *Prigg vs. Pennsylvania*. In his argument to the Supreme Court, the Council for the state of Pennsylvania relied directly on Madison's notes to argue, as I just described, that the convention's debate supported

the principle of due process. Pennsylvania's counsel said that if, under the Constitution, one can arrest and carry away a man without due process of law, the Constitution is a waxen tablet, a writing in the sand. Instead of being the freest country on Earth, it is the vilest despotism that can be imagined. The Taney court utterly ignored this argument and it utterly ignored Madison's notes. Instead of relying on documentary evidence to determine the drafting history of the fugitive slave clause, and to discern what the delegates in the convention may have intended by it, the court held that the Constitution was a compact between the states, and one that the South would never have joined without the complete right and title of ownership in their slaves as property in every state of the union. The court also invalidated the state laws designed to establish due process protections for blacks alleged to have escaped from slavery. Garrison was crushed. He immediately declared there should be no union with slaveholders. But he was in the minority here, even amongst abolitionists. So he began a campaign to persuade abolitionists to accept the interpretation of the Supreme Court and the *Prigg* case as the bitter truth. He told them that all men of intelligence agreed that the American union was affected by a guilty compromise between the free and slaveholding states. He lectured them that the Constitution is not a ball of clay to be molded into any shape. It is not a form of words to be interpreted in any manner; it means precisely what those who framed and adopted it meant.* Nothing more, nothing less.

Still, his colleagues continued to resort to Madison's notes to advance their claims that the Constitution was intended to be anti-slavery. Liberty party co-founder Garrett Smith said, "Whenever I read the Constitution, it presents itself as a noble and beautiful temple of liberty. Whenever I read this preamble, I see the goddess of liberty standing in the porch of this temple. And whenever I read its

amendments I see in them the buttresses by which the builders of this temple gave it additional strength and glory.” The Constitution’s clauses regarding slavery, he said were “pro-slavery exceptions” to the Constitution’s reigning anti-slavery principles. He concluded, “Who can read the Madison papers and yet believe the Constitution is pro-slavery?” So it’s here in this debate between abolitionist factions in the early 1840s that we see the origin of the 1619 Project’s argument that the Constitution is pro-slavery.

And so as I wrap up, I’d like to pause to underscore a few key takeaways. First, nobody from the convention, whether from the free states or slave states, said anything during the ratification debate to indicate that they believed the Constitution was intended to be pro-slavery. Second, the many delegates from the convention who went on to serve in the newly established government supported using the national government powers in ways that were anti-slavery. Third, even as the anti-slavery movement turned more aggressive with the emergence of abolitionists in the 1830s, these abolitionists argued that the Constitution in its letter and spirit was anti-slavery. Finally, it was only after the Taney Court declared in *Prigg vs. Pennsylvania* that the Constitution was pro-slavery, that the most radical of the abolitionists, William Lloyd Garrison, reluctantly but decisively accepted the court’s ruling as the ugly truth. Garrison was a minority even within the abolitionist minority then, but today his position is dominant in the academy, and it represents the spirit of the 1619 Project.

And finally, as I close, I want to turn from these takeaways to a few morals of the story. First, we could draw the same conclusion as Garrison’s colleague Samuel May. Reflecting on this debate between abolitionist factions, he said, “Some maintain that the Constitution was and was intended

to be pro-slavery. Others maintains that it was anti-slavery. It seemed to me that it might be whichever the people wanted to make it.” I think Samuel May makes a very Madisonian point here. This reminds me of James Madison in Federalist 37, when he said the meaning of the Constitution would be equivocal on some points until it was ascertained by a series of particular discussions, just like the discussions that occurred in the first Congress and in subsequent congresses, and in many free states, until those discussions were closed by the Taney court. Given this, we should ask why don’t the people of the early 21st century, namely those responsible for the 1619 Project and those calling for it to be taught in our schools, why don’t they choose to view the Constitution as anti-slavery? By no means would this require us to overlook or cover up the pro-slavery exception, which would and should continue to be taught as an exception.

A second and related moral that I draw is this—Garrison critiqued a Constitution that no longer exists. He critiqued the Taney court’s pro-slavery interpretation of the Constitution. That court’s reasoning has been wholly repudiated by history, and the Constitution has been amended to ensure that the Taney court’s error will never again be made. We can understand why Garrison may have accepted the Taney court’s view of the Constitution as pro-slavery when he did, even if most of his colleagues rejected it. But why should the pernicious and mistaken judgments of the Taney court continue to have a place in our public discourse, and even the most prominent place?

But finally, as logical as these conclusions might seem to me or to my fellow panelists, I think they underestimate the appeal of Garrison’s critique, an appeal that extends now a century and a half after slavery’s abolition. The appeal, I think, is this: when we place our faith in something like democracy and

expect that it will deliver to us perfect liberty, perfect equality, or perfect community, our faith will never be perfectly upheld. At any given moment, we may see an event that shakes our faith in perfect democracy or even shatters it. When this occurs, the faithful might, like Garrison, decide that it is time to burn everything to the ground. The only solution that I see is this: we must defy the 1619 Project and, borrowing from Abraham Lincoln, we must let the anti-slavery Constitution be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges. We must let it be written in primers, spelling books, and in almanacs. We must let it be preached from the pulpit and proclaimed in legislative halls. And in short, we must let it become the political religion of the nation. This, I think, is our Constitution's last best hope. Thank you.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Professor Ross. In an earlier panel here, Professor Diana Schaub gave a presentation on Frederick Douglass who makes the same argument: that the original Constitution before the 13th and 14th and 15th amendments is, to quote Douglass, "a glorious liberty document." Professor Schaub points out that, if you read the 1619 Project, Frederick Douglass is virtually invisible in its account, which makes sense, because if they included Douglass, the whole 1619 Project would have been dismantled before it started. Thank you, Professor Ross. And now we turn to Professor Fornieri. Professor Fornieri, let me read the prompt here, the quote from the 1619 Project and then ask for your rebuttal. "Like many white Americans, Lincoln opposed slavery as a cruel system at odds with American ideals. But Lincoln also opposed black equality. Lincoln believed that free black people were a 'troublesome presence' incompatible with a democracy intended only for white people. 'Free them and make them politically and socially our equals?' he asked. 'My own feelings will not admit of this. And if mine would, we well know that those of

the great mass of white people will not.'" Professor Fornieri.

Joseph Fornieri

Thank you so much. I'm honored and delighted to be here. I'm grateful for this opportunity to speak. I must say as a part time blues musician I was disappointed I couldn't be in Austin, the home of Waterloo guitars and Stevie Ray Vaughan. So I hope we at some point, we have a prize. I want to thank David Randall and I want to thank the Texas Public Policy Institute, the Alexander Hamilton Institute, and the National Association of Scholars. I want to get right to the point given the limited amount of time that we have. And so let me take up these assertions.

You just quoted the first assertion. Like many white Americans, Lincoln opposed slavery as a cruel system at odds with American ideals. What struck me the first time I read this is that the statement includes several major propositions that contradict the author's own thesis. If slavery was at odds with American ideals, then how could slavery, at the same time, be the very foundation of a regime dedicated to white supremacy: of white people, by white people, and for white people? The statement further affirms that "many white Americans," including Lincoln, opposed slavery as cruel. How could this be if our nation was irredeemably racist and white supremacist? To the contrary, I think it's factually problematic in the sense that most Southerners, a large part of the population, didn't see slavery as cruel, and this is a brute fact that needs to be taken into consideration. Slavery was entrenched. They saw slavery as a blessing to both master and slave. Unfortunately, far too many northerners were morally indifferent to this cruelty. Think of Stephen A. Douglas, for example, and the doctrine of popular sovereignty.

To repeat: the proposition concedes that slavery was at odds with American ideals. How could this be if American ideals were profoundly racist and excluded

blacks? Let's consider the next assertion: that Lincoln opposed black equality. Okay, a vague statement. What does this mean? And this is often brought up today; that because Lincoln was not for full social and political equality before the Civil War, that he somehow falls short and his greatness is diminished. How could Lincoln have devoted his life to resisting slavery and yet oppose black equality? The author refers to Lincoln's remarks in his Peoria speech of October 16, 1854, about freeing slaves and then making them politically and socially our equals. And I think the key words here are "politically and socially equal."

In American public law at the time, there were three kinds of rights: unalienable rights, which proceeded from the hand of the Creator; civic rights, rights of citizenship; and political rights, or suffrage-voting. Prior to the Fourteenth Amendment, these civic, social, and political rights were left to the discretion of the states. After condemning slavery's extension in the strongest terms in the Peoria speech, and of course she [Hannah-Jones] omits these passages, Lincoln then acknowledges the difficulty of dealing with the "existing institution" of slavery. We should further note that legally, the Constitution had established a firewall between the federal government and the existence of the institution in the states, preventing any federal interference with it. This is a very important legal conundrum and problem that seems to be omitted from the discussion, the rule of law. The territories were a different matter, since they fell under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

So in the context of 1854, when Lincoln makes these remarks, it would have been political suicide in the state of Illinois to advocate full social and political equality for blacks, which was at the discretion of the state governments. In fact, the state of Illinois had a black exclusion law passed only a few years earlier, by

overwhelming margins, about 70% and over, that barred, this is truly remarkable, that barred free blacks from even entering the state, prohibited them from voting, precisely what was meant by political equality, and denied them citizenship. And this is in this so-called free state of Illinois.

So we get a sense of what Lincoln is up against here. He had to walk a political tightrope between being anti-slavery, yet avoiding the charge of radical abolitionism, which would have amounted to political suicide, given public opinion in Illinois. Politics is the art of the possible, not the ideal. Illinois was not Massachusetts. The passage also includes a qualification that leaves doubt in the reader's mind about Lincoln's own position. Lincoln says, "My own feelings will not admit of this." He's talking about freeing the slave and making them our equals. And then he immediately says, that, "And if mine would," qualifies this, "and if mine would, we know well that those of the great mass of white people will not."

For those that have lived with Lincoln and studied him, this is a classic use of studied ambiguity. Here, Lincoln leaves open the possibility that the statement may not be his own personal views, but in accommodation to the political realities and racial prejudices of the time. Why would one even include the qualification "and if mine would?" And Lincoln consistently does this in other speeches. He introduces these qualifications to leave doubt in the mind of the careful reader/listener about the gap between the ideal and the practical.

Today, we condemn the persistence of systemic racism. We see racism as ubiquitous while seeming to minimize the actual force of slavery in the 19th century, when racism and white supremacy was firmly entrenched and protected. The criticism of Lincoln for not supporting full equality of blacks at the time, in my judgment, is a red herring. It's a red

herring now as it was then. It's often repeated, and distracts us from the Herculean effort that it took to end slavery. Need I remind us that it took a Civil War and 700,000 American lives to end this pernicious, entrenched institution? And it's also based on the flawed assumption that people in the 19th century would embrace overnight the mores of an interracial society. Lincoln's strategy was to first gain recognition of the African American's common humanity and the vindication of their inalienable rights. This, he believed, was the necessary and indispensable first step for expanding black freedom.

And it was no small task, given public opinion at the time. Just read the works of Stephen Douglas, read the works of John C. Calhoun. Even the northern abolitionists themselves, as Michael Burlingame has shown in his voluminous biography, were tainted by racism if measured by today's standards. Pro-slavery doctrines and white supremacy had degraded blacks to a subhuman status. So the recognition of African Americans' common humanity, their title to inalienable rights, and the inherent evil of slavery, was a precursor to the extending of further equality, namely civic and political, to African Americans. Well, this is in 1854 before the war. The war, of course, changed the circumstances by allowing direct federal interference against state slavery and the recruitment of black soldiers, a path to citizenship.

Let's see if Lincoln walks the walk when he becomes President of the United States. To what extent does he advance black freedom? Lincoln as a statesman, we need to keep in mind, was dedicated to the rule of law. And I think the essence of his statesmanship is found in his use of Proverbs 25, that his task is to preserve "the apple of gold," which is the principles of the Declaration of Independence enshrined or framed by "the picture of silver," the Constitution, and both are required. We live in a democratic society where the consent of the governed is a

prerequisite to legitimate government. Lincoln was implacably anti-slavery. We see that in his first Inaugural Address: although he acknowledges concessions towards the existing institution of slavery under the Constitution, he also defies Dred Scott. And remarkably, while many focus on his willingness to uphold the fugitive slave provision, they omit his suggestion right after that he's willing to extend federal protection to free blacks under Article Four Section Two, the privileges and immunities clause. As Herman Bell says, that is a remarkable and progressive civil rights step for the time, in blatant defiance of Dred Scott.

Of course, the Emancipation Proclamation itself, which we could speak on for the next hour, was a momentous step in destroying slavery. But also united to that was the recruitment of blacks into the Union forces, and this was traditionally a path to citizenship. Lincoln recognized this around the same time. Shortly after the preliminary emancipation, Lincoln's Attorney General, Bates, on November 29, 1862, acknowledges that the federal government will recognize black citizenship. So here, we have a movement—from ending slavery towards extending the principle of equality further, to include citizenship. Very important. Also, we know that prior to the war Lincoln had supported compensated emancipation, with the consent of the states, and colonization. He speaks of colonization I think as a publicity maneuver, as a placebo for the forthcoming thunderbolt of the Emancipation Proclamation. But after the Emancipation Proclamation goes into effect, he drops all discussion of it. No federal money is spent on it aside from a relief effort to rescue some colonized blacks off the coast of Haiti by a private effort. The colonization rhetoric and effort then ceases. How serious then was Lincoln about it? In 1864, it looks like Lincoln will lose the election. Public opinion is turning against him. And he's under pressure even from his campaign manager, Ray-

mond, to revoke or rescind the Emancipation Proclamation. Yet he's unwilling to do this for political gain. He writes a blind memorandum conceding defeat that reveals that he's willing to stand on principle, and if necessary sacrifice political ambition to this more noble cause. Of course, Sherman's capture of Atlanta turns the tide and fortuitously ensures that Lincoln would win the election of 1864. When we talk about equality, when we talk about racism, we always need to take into consideration the question, "in comparison to what and when?" And we can just take a look at Lincoln's opponent in the 1864 election, and the platform of the Democratic Party at that time for a striking contrast. McClellan was an opponent of black freedom; the Democratic Party was toying with peace at any price, including a return to the status quo antebellum in regard to slavery.

Also Lincoln, in a private letter, supported, at the end of his administration and before his assassination, limited black suffrage under the reconstructed government in Louisiana. So now, with the end of slavery, we have a movement of support for black citizenship, and private support for black suffrage. Now, keep in mind that black citizenship and suffrage, prior to the respective 14th and 15th Amendments passed after Lincoln's death, were left to the discretion of the states. Indeed, Lincoln's last public speech contained an explicit endorsement of black citizenship. And ironically, Booth was in the audience, he was overheard saying that this is the last speech Lincoln will ever make, because of his support for black citizenship. Of course, Booth uses another word, the "N" word. Booth considers this the last straw, and says that he will run him through. "I will run him through." And we have this on record from an eyewitness.

But finally, before I conclude, I want to call in my final witness, and that is the great Rochesterian—I never want anyone to forget he's from Rochester,

New York—Frederick Douglass, who said this about Lincoln and Lincoln's strategy in advancing equality in December of 1865, after Lincoln's assassination. And the context of these remarks is that he was reflecting on, he was speaking of Lincoln's support for black suffrage at the end of Lincoln's career. And so, Douglass says the following:

It was like Lincoln. He never shocked prejudices unnecessarily. Having learned statesmanship while splitting rails, he always used the thin edge of the wedge first. And the fact that he used this at all meant that he would, if need be, use the thick as well as the thin. Whosoever else have caused to mourn the loss of Abraham Lincoln, to the colored people of this country, his death is an unspeakable calamity.

So Douglass clearly recognized the nuances of Lincoln's statesmanship and Lincoln's strategy to advance equality. And that meant accommodating the racial prejudices of the time. It meant taking into consideration the limits of public opinion. It meant upholding the rule of law, especially given that there were great suspicions of Lincoln before the war, that he was a radical who would run roughshod over the Constitution. Douglass also said after meeting with Lincoln that he was the only white man who can talk to a colored man without assuming an air of condescension. Finally, it should be noted that Lincoln met with Douglass three times, and the second time they met, in August of 1864, Lincoln actually proposed a plan to establish an armed underground railroad that would spread the word of the Emancipation Proclamation to the slaves and help assist them to freedom. He did this, he confided to Douglass, because he thought he was going to lose the election of 1864 and the next administration would reverse the strides towards black freedom. And this was really a last ditch effort to try and bring more people to freedom. I think that speaks volumes about Lincoln's commitment to equality.

Now, I think that, in conclusion, the Civil War provides us with a cautionary tale about the fragility of our Union, and the universal principles for which it stood. I recognize, I appreciate the value of diversity. But it should not eclipse our common humanity, and the fraternal bonds of our union. Those bonds of union are continually assailed today as they are by the 1619 Project. And they require a spirited defense. And that's why I'm here. Lincoln's rare example of statesmanship, I believe, provides us with the moral and intellectual resources to confront these challenges, and to preserve our union. Thank you.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, professor Forniery, and I think your concluding with additional information about Frederick Douglass gives us another indication why he is studiously neglected by Jones. We'll now turn to individual questions for you going back to Professor Gutzman. Professor Gutzman, in your view, what are the origins of the current attacks on the Constitution and on the American Republic? And then second, why should everyday Americans care?

Kevin Gutzman

What are the origins of the attack? Well, there's a longstanding unhappiness with the idea of *laissez faire*-based, decentralized, republican society, especially in academia, but of course, from academia you end up with the influence of academia being reflected in journalism and other aspects of the world of arts and letters. And so I guess it's not surprising that there should be a coordinated attempt to undermine, not just respect for the American experience and the American political establishment/political system, but also appreciation of it—not only in the sense of positive understanding, but just in the sense of an

understanding of America's history with problems of self-government. It is, to a large extent, a reflection of the internal politics of the academy that we end up in this situation.

I've noticed the last three or four years that various aspects of the media have been kind of like a running seminar in African-American Studies. You could turn on ESPN in the afternoon and see programs in which you'd hear classic works of African-American literature and resentful writings in that vein parroted at length every day, in a very hostile way. Again, I think the bottom line is that this really had its germ in the academy. And then there's the question, well, why do we end up with that? My theory about that is maybe a bit abstruse, but I actually think this is an effect of the Vietnam War. I believe that many people who were opposed to the Vietnam War decided one way to get a draft exemption was to go into the academy. I actually had, when I was a law student at the University of Texas law school, a professor, a very prominent liberal constitutional scholar who also had a PhD in political science, who told us one day in class that if the Vietnam War had lasted two more years, he would have gotten an MD. I think that actually kind of captures it. So you end up with a lot of people in academia who they skew to the left because one way to avoid going into the military is going into academia. I'm not saying this is the sole explanatory factor in the real lurch to the left in academia in the last generation or two, but I think this is an element of it.

And then, of course, we can name particular individuals in academia whose works have had an outsized influence and are really in the same vein as the 1619 Project. I won't name them, but I'm sure their names come to mind. People should understand that you didn't tell me you were going to ask me this, so this is off the top of my head, but I think that it goes a long way toward explaining how we ended up with this

current situation. It's not that the 1619 Project itself is the episode, it's that the 1619 Project is an aspect of this current moment we're in. It's really bigger than the 1619 Project, which is one manifestation of a larger problem, I think.

Jason Ross

If you don't mind me jumping on this point. One thing that strikes me is that Americans today have a hard time looking back at Americans of the founding era and realizing that Americans of the founding era sometimes weren't even sure if Baptists and Episcopalians could get along, or if anybody could get along with the Quakers. And we take that for granted today. But then they didn't know that people who had different religious beliefs and commitments could coexist peacefully. They certainly didn't know and hadn't had the experience of blacks and whites coexisting peacefully, especially given the context in which they had been related through slavery.

We have the experience now of more than two centuries where we know that not only can Baptists and Episcopalians get along, blacks and whites can get along and coexist peacefully. But I think it's very easy and sometimes very tempting to look back at the past and be surprised and even shocked that people didn't know then what we know now. And we now have the experience of well over two centuries that they didn't have. That's all part of the experiment in American self-government—we as a people, an American people, over time, learn along the way. And we get better at the experiment, we hope.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you. Professor Ross, we have a specific question for you. Before we turn to that I would only add this to what you and Professor Gutzman said. I think that the late political science professor Harry

Jaffa would agree with both of you. And in fact, in his book, *The Crisis of the House Divided*, which is an account of the Lincoln-Douglas debates (and for the audience, if you haven't read it, you should)—in his 1959 introduction to that work, he says that today, the academy is responsible for the ruling opinions of society. And then he says that the intolerance and utopianism taught in the academy cannot help but to spell the end of constitutional democracy.

Now, the specific question for you, Professor Ross. How would you respond to those who say, and we hear this often, that because so many of the founders owned slaves, their anti-slavery words, or even their anti-slavery actions ultimately mean nothing?

Jason Ross

It's a good question, and it's a question that I know young people especially ask a lot. And I think Professor Gutzman touched on this in his talk. My answer is that words and deeds are not always related, but you don't often have deeds without words. And so when you write down that all men are created equal, even if that doesn't describe the complete political reality of the day, that gives you a moral, a principle, that you can approach. And that's how the Declaration has functioned throughout American history and functioned in the context of the debates about slavery and how whites and blacks ought to relate with one another. If we didn't have that principle, if we didn't have it written down, we wouldn't have it to live up to.

It was a new principle. And it was a principle that not everybody understood the implications to, and that not everybody was ready to embrace as readily as we embrace it today. But without having written down that principle, even if they imperfectly lived up to it, we would not have had the progress that we have had in terms of peacefully coexisting across

racess.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Professor Ross. And I believe the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. would agree with you. In his 1963 "I Have a Dream speech," he identifies the Declaration and the Constitution as a promissory note.

Joseph Fornieri

That's right.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you. Professor Fornieri, we have a question for you. Would you discuss in detail Abraham Lincoln's letter to Horace Greeley in 1863, in which Lincoln says that he would save the Union with slavery or he would save the Union without slavery, but that saving the Union was paramount?

Joseph Fornieri

Yeah, that's a good question. I taught at the secondary level, and I was always somewhat troubled by a question on the Regents Exam that established a disjunction between the Union and Lincoln's anti-slavery views. And I think the allusion was to his letter to Horace Greeley, which, if one reads it literally on the surface, conveys the impression that Lincoln was a cold pragmatist and was unconcerned about the plight of African Americans or about slavery, and that very much like Bismarck he was a practitioner of realpolitik. But a more careful reading of the speech, of the letter, and now that we have historical hindsight, shows, really reveals the nuances of Lincoln's statesmanship as well.

In that speech, he says, "My paramount object in

this struggle is to save the Union." And it should be noted that in the speech, Lincoln is replying to Horace Greeley, who was critical of him in a prior editorial saying that Lincoln was too much in thrall to the border states. Greeley was urging an immediate Emancipation Proclamation. So, Lincoln replies to him, and of course, it's a way of Lincoln using these letters to the press to influence public opinion. There was no TV so Lincoln was able to influence public opinion through these letters, which he well knew would be published widely and digested. So he says his paramount object is to preserve the Union, which does not mean his sole or only object. And then he discusses the different scenarios. If I could preserve the Union by freeing all the slaves, I would do it. If I could preserve the Union by freeing some and leaving others in slavery, I would do it. If I could save the Union by freeing none, I'd do it like this. So he discusses these different scenarios, and what we know now in hindsight, is that a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation was already written and revealed to his Cabinet at this time. And of course, preserving the Union for Lincoln always means preserving the principles for which it stood. And that means a Union dedicated to the apple of gold and the principles of the Declaration, which condemns slavery in the long term.

Finally, what's often omitted in this letter to Greeley is Lincoln's final remarks where he says, I have spoken here in regard to my official duty, which does not change my personal wish that all men everywhere could be free. So I think this is an important preparation for the Emancipation Proclamation, that it is meant to assuage the border states who are strategically and politically crucial to defeating the Confederacy. Preserving the Union is the *sine qua non* of ending slavery. And yet, when read carefully through the lens of Lincoln's own political thoughts, it doesn't change his long term commitment to the destruction of slavery, because the Union, according to Lincoln,

is fundamentally anti-slavery.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you, Professor Fornieri. This question is for all three of you. And let me preface it with this statement. It's been said that the philosophy taught in the classroom in this generation will be the philosophy practiced in the legislature in the next generation. All three of you are in the trenches teaching current college students and tomorrow's leaders. Have you seen any changes over the years in your students' attitudes toward America?

Joseph Fornieri

I was just speaking of it. And I love my students. However, I think that the level of civic literacy, for one thing, is diminished. And I think a lot of studies reveal that. And to the extent that there is a discussion of government, I think students are reading it through the lens of Howard Zinn. And the ideologies of identity politics have made their way to the secondary levels, not only in the colleges. This has certainly influenced students' perceptions of their country. I think we see anger, grievance and resentment. And it's boiling up right now, well there's been years of preparation.

And it's interesting that we see many of those who are disenchanted with the United States and see the United States, see our country as a fascist regime, are members of the upper middle class. And so where are these notions coming from? This isn't the proletariat. So, I think it's a deep concern that we, and I think that there's increasing, it's sad to say, contempt for the social sciences or for the liberal arts out there because of it. We desperately need support to continue the good fight, because there's going to be increased cutting of the social sciences and the liberal arts, and students are going to be encouraged

to go into math and science, which is fine, my father's a mathematician, if that's your calling. However, what remnant is left, and what legacy is left in terms of teaching students? We're almost afraid to discuss or acknowledge love of country, or even gratitude for our country. And that doesn't mean a critical blindness to the country's flaws by any means. But critical thinking should also involve appreciative thinking. So I've seen a change in my twenty years of teaching. And I'm troubled and I'm concerned about it.

Jason Ross

Yes, I think there's a greater sense of cynicism amongst young people today, and even amongst people in the academy. And I think that we are far more liable to judge our fellow citizens by the worst thing in their history than by the best thing. And I see that we are doing that now with our own history as a nation. So we're going to judge the Constitution by what most abolitionists call its pro-slavery exception, and not by its anti-slavery principles. And we're going to judge those delegates at the convention. Dr. Gutzman talked in particular about Thomas Jefferson and all of the anti-slavery efforts that he advanced. But we will look at Jefferson and say, well, but he owned slaves. And so there is this greater tendency to be cynical about the motives of people. We assume that we know what is going on in someone's heart, or mind, or soul, and it's always evil and it's dark.

And in a certain way—I tried to highlight this point in my talk—this was the heart of the argument that the Constitution was pro-slavery. We know what was in the interest and the motives of the southern delegates. And therefore, they never would have accepted the Constitution if it wasn't entirely and thoroughly protecting their right to property in slaves. They never *said* anything like that. But we know what was in their heart. And so there's this cynicism about one another's motives that I think has

reached troubling proportions today. And I think the 1619 project is representative of that. And it's a very concerning trend.

Joseph Fornieri

I'll say one more thing. I just want to add here, and I don't want to take too much time, is I am troubled too. I've been teaching at the college level for twenty years, and I taught at the secondary level. I am concerned about the restrictions on speech, and the chilling effect on speech and the repercussions for voicing a different opinion—even a view that supports the First Amendment since speech is now considered a kind of violence. There's a real concern if one confronts an opposing view too strongly, you will be shamed, disciplined and stigmatized. It is becoming increasingly difficult to have a fair fight in the marketplace of ideas. I think we all know what I'm talking about. I mean a cursory look at the news would reveal the First Amendment is imperiled. And that's part of the problem too. We have seen this before: a militant ideology that prevents one from asking questions. Okay? Whether we can trace it to Foucault, or Marcuse, and some of these thinkers, or to cultural and political change, it is increasingly assertive and aggressive. And at its core, it denies our common humanity. And when that goes, we're in trouble. All right.

Jason Ross

I'll just point out that nobody in American history embraced the principle of free speech more thoroughly than the abolitionists.

Joseph Fornieri

Exactly.

Jason Ross

A central part of their argument was "We are going to be heard." "We're going to use the pulpit, we're going to use the press, we're going to use petitions, we're going to exercise every part of the First Amendment. That's the heart of our strategy to stand up against slavery." And so now I see folks on the left who agree in principle with what the abolitionists were going for, but who disagree entirely on the principle of freedom of speech.

Joseph Fornieri

I mean, the argument is free speech has been weaponized to intimidate and silence vulnerable minorities. But yet American history shows that those same minorities wielded free speech as a weapon of their liberation.

Tom Lindsay

The black civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s could not have succeeded without a robust protection of free speech.

Joseph Fornieri

And the court recognized that and certainly expanded free speech to include symbolic expression and other forms.

Kevin Gutzman

The first question was about our students these days and whether things have changed. I've been teaching in post-secondary institutions for over two decades now, and I think, far more commonly now than was the case at first, entry-level students come to me with just a long list of misdeeds that they think the United States has committed. They have no idea of any

kind of context. So for example, I saw a poll recently that showed people under age 25 thought, by a large majority, that slavery was an American institution. They had no idea of the role that Anglophones actually played in the history of slavery in the world. They thought we had invented it, or at least if we hadn't invented it, well, it was mainly an American institution. I'd tell them well, really, it was something like one out of every twenty-eight people who came across the Middle Passage that ended up in today's United States. Beginning college history students are flummoxed by that. It's baffling. Who knew?

I think instructing people about the past has to include providing some kind of context. So, for example, you say George Washington owned slaves? Well, he was born in a colony in which, in a family in which he was going to inherit slaves and it was illegal to free them. He owned them. What would a moral man do? Well, he could sell them, which was actually a bad thing to have happen to you if you were a slave. So I get these kinds of asseverations from students, but this guy's a bad guy, because x, y, and z. And we just kind of have to tease through even the most fundamental aspects of the reality that these people encountered and say, really? Now how do you judge the situation? In other words, it's as if they've commonly been subjected to propaganda. It's not that they don't know anything. It is, to borrow a phrase, what they know just ain't so. It's not knowing nothing. It's actually worse than knowing nothing.

I don't think this is an isolated phenomenon. I think it's extremely common that people coming out of our high schools these days are afflicted with this kind of mis-training in relation to the American past and the American government and American society, or actually in understanding the current state of our society, which remains preferable to virtually any other one in the world. This is a very unhappy reality, I think.

Tom Lindsay

The reason I asked this question of all three of you is because here at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, we began last summer and continued this summer an institute for Texas civics teachers. And last year, we had an eighth grade civics teacher tell the class that her experience has been that by the time students are middle school age—middle school age!—they already come to class cynical about the American regime. And I was shocked. And I said to the rest of the teachers, “Has this been your experience?” They all said, “Yes, and it gets worse every fall.”

Kevin Gutzman

Let me tell you one little story that will buttress the point you're making. I have three children. My middle child just graduated from the University of Virginia. And when she was in the fourth grade, she brought home her first history essay assignment. The assignment was, you are Benjamin Banneker, write a letter to Tom Jefferson about slavery. Age nine. Now of course, she wasn't supposed to say, well, Benjamin Banneker was a free man and Thomas Jefferson was the person who hired the first free colored person ever hired by the federal government. No, that was not the lesson. So she was supposed to adopt the posture of instructing Jefferson about his immorality. That was what to do at age nine. Yeah.

Tom Lindsay

Like the three of you, I do not blame the students. Far from it. No, I blame the adults who are supposed to be in charge. But that said, only 19% of native born Americans under the age of 45 can even get six out of ten right on the USCIS citizenship test. The blame for that seems to me to lie at the doorstep of our universities. This is cultivated ignorance. And in the face of such cultivated ignorance, specious claims,

such as those that characterize the 1619 Project, are much more likely to be accepted. Or as Tocqueville said, a simple lie will beat a complicated truth any day of the week.

We have some questions from the audience. An audience member asks, “What do you see as the best way of pointing out the very narrow view of human and societal behavior required in order to reach the 1619 Project’s conclusions, given the overall documentation of human behavior found in the historical record?”

Jason Ross

I’m going to answer that simply. It’s easier for us to assume we know the truth without reading the text. And so I think maybe one generation assumed that the truth was all unvarnished good. And maybe there’s been a reaction against that. And now the argument is the truth is unvarnished bad. But you’re right, students should be reading the documents. Students should be reading the Declaration of Independence. Students should be reading the Constitution. Students should be reading the convention. Students should be wrestling with these questions on their own. And there are a lot of reasons why students are not being asked to read these resources. And some of them are ideological, and some of them are having to do with changes in expectations put on schools. Some of them are related to changes in funding for history and civic education. But the bottom line is, all students in a self-governing Republic ought to know the documents, and they ought to know where the documents came from. And they ought to understand the origins and the arguments of those documents. And it’s just not that way.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you. Any other comments?

Joseph Fornieri

I think reading the documents is good medicine, as Jason said. It’s a good prophylactic against some of the ideologies, to go right to the horse’s mouth. You need context, but if you get it right from the horse’s mouth, proverbially speaking, it goes a long way. Schools have tried with the documentary-based questions, but of course, what are the documents they’re using? How helpful? I think, increasingly we’ve moved away from political history into social history. And not all social history is bad. There’s great parts of it. But when you’re talking about these momentous events in American history, they need to know about their own government.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you. We have another question from our audience, which I will read: “Lack of civic literacy and weak historical background knowledge, or what E.D. Hirsch calls cultural literacy, should trouble all of us in higher education. What can professors or organizations like the National Association of Scholars do to reach back to the secondary level and improve this troubling problem?”

Jason Ross

Well, I was going to say, I would love it if someone on this call ran for their local school board. If someone listening today, somebody who has watched this conference throughout the week, I would love it if one or two or ten of the people who have heard this conversation, would go out and run for local school board. I think that’s a critically important part.

And I think anytime you get groupthink on a question, it’s probably time to rethink the question. And so I think, largely over the last 20 years, there has

been groupthink in the historical profession about the Constitution being pro-slavery. And with very few exceptions, that's been the general assumption amongst historians, that the Constitution was and was intended to be pro-slavery. And we need research on the fact that that wasn't actually the case.

Let's step back and rethink this question. If everybody is coming to the same conclusion, and that conclusion is becoming the present premise of future research, then we're sort of in our own little bubble. And we need to step back and rethink how we're approaching this topic.

Kevin Gutzman

I wasn't going to suggest running for the school board, but I do think there could be more parental involvement in actual curricular affairs. I've known people who've been on school boards, and they're mainly concerned with budgets and construction and pensions, and when's the next election? I don't think they really tend to drill down to questions such as what kids in APUSH are being taught about *The Federalist*. So it might take more effort, actually, to get to know what kids are being taught.

But I think that in most schools, people would be surprised what their kids are being, or most school districts, people would be surprised what their kids are being taught. I said I had three kids. Another one of my kids, when he was a senior in high school, asked his sophomore English teacher, "Are all the English teachers socialists?" And she smiled and said, "Not all of them." So the reason he had come to this conclusion was that the reading list.... He'd bring things he was reading in English classes home to me and say, it's just more of, you know, a hostility to private enterprise—but he's got this on the brain—and after a while, he noticed that it was nothing but hostility to private enterprise, and so it was Upton

Sinclair, and John Steinbeck, and just the same kind of thing all the time.

I am certain that people who are on the school board have no idea this is going on. Parents really, through elected school boards, can shape what their kids are being taught, but in general, they don't make any effort to do that. That's something that one might try to do. One might mobilize one's fellows and see what people are being taught in English class or (particularly nowadays, English tends to be, both in the high schools and colleges, a highly ideological field), of course, in history. In Texas, in the government class they have the senior year in high schools, it varies from state to state, but the actual content is really a matter of public policy. And there's no reason why voters, citizens, shouldn't be involved in it. The fact that your kid has graduated from high school doesn't mean it's not still your local public high school. People are hearing this and thinking, "Wow, big time sink." Well, no, it's not easy. But this is the kind of thing that needs to be done. I think people need to pay attention....

Jason Ross

Self-government is not easy.

Kevin Gutzman

...to curriculum. That's right. If you just allow the local teachers, the local products of education colleges to decide what's being taught, well, I can tell you where this is going to end up.

Tom Lindsay

Yes. To add to your statement, Professor Gutzman, about the predilections of English teachers these days. A fellow political scientist whom I know, who has taught at an Ivy League University for decades, tells this story: When seniors come to him and say,

I want to go to grad school because I want to teach politics, he tells them, well, if you want to teach politics, then you should apply to the English department, because that's all they do.

Jason Ross

Well, I just wanted to connect with Dr. Gutzman's point. It's a little bit ironic that we're here talking about the 1619 Project, but when I ask folks who are not involved in higher education or politics about the 1619 Project, or mention it to them, almost invariably they say, "What is that?" So they haven't heard of it. But when many of them do hear about the sentiments articulated in and by the 1619 Project, they hear about it when their kids are coming home from school or college and saying, "Mom, Dad, you're racist." That this country is racist. I've heard this recently from a number of different people. "But I sent them to a good school." "They went to good schools, they went to a good college. And now they're telling me that I'm racist." This is serious business. Our relationship with our children is strained because they think that we're racist. "But I sent them to a good school." And they don't know what's being taught to their children. They assume that their children's teachers and their children's professors have their best interests and the best interest of society at heart. And they have no idea that these kinds of pernicious doctrines are being taught.

Joseph Fornieri

You had mentioned that you invite secondary teachers in Texas, and I think that that's been, as a former secondary teacher, that's been one of my strategies, is to try and bring together scholars and secondary teachers to try to provide enrichment for them, and so that they can take it back into their class, and they have the resources, intellectual resources, and the opportunity to discuss these matters, and get an

alternative perspective. So we have the Center of Statesmanship here at RIT [Rochester Institute of Technology]. I've worked with secondary teachers through the Ashbrook Center, as well. And there are so many dedicated secondary teachers out there. My whole family, my sister is a primary school teacher, my wife's a teacher. They're overwhelmed in many ways. Many good teachers have been maligned by people painting with too broad a brush. And so I think it's important that we identify those that are serious about teaching, and provide them with enrichment and give them the kind of the resources where they could share this knowledge, just like what we're doing here, with their students. Because unfortunately, I think as Allen Guelzo had told me that the 1619 Project now has been picked up by thousands, right, am I wrong? Thousands of school districts, right? And so these teachers are getting it, and it's being foisted on them as part the curriculum, and there's no alternative. That's really hard for us to fight. How are we going to fight that? I agree. Have parents run for the board, but well, we can do our part.

Jason Ross

And just to connect with that point. Teachers are asked to do so many things these days that are not teaching.

Joseph Fornieri

Exactly.

Jason Ross

They have so many responsibilities that are not teaching that anything that makes the job of teaching easier, they're going to snap up. And so you mentioned the Ashbrook Center—I have worked with the Ashbrook Center before, they're a great organization, and they have great resources for teachers, and they should be funded at ten or a hundred times the level that they are. That kind of support, and

those kinds of resources, are vital for teachers who don't have the time to focus on developing a new resource and a new lecture for every class when they have so many other things that they are asked to do. And I think, at some level, having an easy narrative is attractive to teachers for precisely that reason. I don't have the time, I don't have the bandwidth to get into the nuances for each of these issues. But if I have a narrative that can hook my students, then I will get their attention. And an easy narrative is the 1619 Project. "They were all racist."

Joseph Fornieri

The organizations, the Hamilton Institute, the Ashbrook Center and your organizations, I think it's important to form a union, especially in view of what is occurring today. There has to be some counter pressure. As Franklin said, if we don't stick together, we're going to hang separately. I think that's true. I think that's true. And that would mean, part of it is the exposure to the light of day, exposure of the ideology to the light of day would go far, I think, for people of good will. And I believe they're still out there. But I would encourage more conversation and a greater concerted effort to influence secondary teachers as a counterbalance here. And I mean people with all different views, of course, diversity of opinions, if it's backed by facts.

Tom Lindsay

Let me read to you one last question from the audience. Our audience member says, "I have the opportunity to speak with a candidate running for the position of state superintendent this evening. Can each of you give me one item I might address to her?"

Jason Ross

What's your opinion on the 1619 Project?

Tom Lindsay

Agreed.

Jason Ross

What is your view on the 1619 Project? Should it be taught in schools? Should it not be taught in schools?

Tom Lindsay

Yes, good. Just to follow up on that, I would ask this candidate what her opinion is of Abraham Lincoln's assertion that civic education should teach reverence for the Constitution and laws. Is teaching reverence for the Constitution deemed somehow "unscientific" today?

Jason Ross

And is teaching reverence for the Constitution, does that mean teaching unqualified support? That means not asking questions about it. And I don't think that it does. We can ask questions reverently. And I think that we ought to, and our students ought to be taught to do that. That's an important part of becoming a citizen.

Joseph Fornieri

Another way to put it is that the four of us are opposed to this thoroughgoing critique of the American regime, the fundamental attack on the American regime. We don't think that it's flawless. We don't think there's nothing to be improved. We know that it's much better than what came before it, and that it's preferable to many existing regimes. So besides that, we know that we can influence it if we try.

Jason Ross

Yes. And now part of the point I tried to make in my talk is they [the Constitutional Convention] had been

through a grueling eighty eight days trying to hammer out a new frame of government. And everybody lost something that they thought should be in there. And I think everybody was equally unhappy with some facet of the Constitution, but we have to make the best of this. And that's what self-government is all about. It's not going to be perfect. I'm not going to be perfect. None of my fellow citizens is going to be perfect, and we'll all be imperfect in our own ways. But we have to make it work. We found the one.

Joseph Fornieri

I would ask her point blank, do you see an erosion of free speech and of the First Amendment in education and in our country at large? And if so, what would you do to protect diversity of expression?

Tom Lindsay

Yes, that would be an excellent question.

Kevin Gutzman

That is a good question.

Tom Lindsay

I am sorry that we've run out of time, because I know that I speak for our entire audience when I say thank you very much to all three of you for your very thoughtful presentations. And I would also remind our audience that our next panel, as part of the last day of our week-long conference, will be tomorrow at 11am Eastern, 10 Central, 8 Pacific Time, and there will be a panel called Let America be America Again. Again, thank you to our panelists, and thank you.

Joseph Fornieri

We'll see you in Rochester as soon as this clears.

Tom Lindsay

Thank you.

Joseph Fornieri

Bye, nice to see everybody. Again, keep up the good work. I enjoyed all your talks.

Tom Lindsay

Same here. Thank you.

Joseph Fornieri

I want to get copies of them. Take care.

Let America be America Again

Richard A. Johnson III, Cathy Young,
Carol Swain, Wilfred Reilly

Richard Johnson

Hello, I'm Richard Johnson, and I'm the moderator for this particular session. The session is entitled "Let America be America Again." And I'm joined by three wonderful distinguished speakers on this panel. The first is Dr. Wilfred Reilly. Dr. Wilfred Reilly is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Kentucky State University. Dr. Carol Swain, Professor of Political Science and Law at Vanderbilt, retired. Dr. Swain.

Carol Swain

Thank you.

Richard Johnson

And Cathy Young, Contributing Editor for Reason. And we're going to have a lively discussion today. But before we jump right into our lively discussion, I want each one of our panelists just to give a brief intro, and then we'll go from there. We'll start with Dr. Reilly.

Wilfred Reilly

All right, I'm Wilfred Reilly. As you mentioned, I'm an Associate Professor of Political Science at Kentucky State University. I'm also the author of the book, *Hate Crime Hoax and Taboo: Ten Facts You Can't Talk About*. And my understanding today is that we're discussing sort of the future for America, goals for the homeland, if you will, in the context of a lot of the movements that are going on today, such as, for example, Black Lives Matter, that really have a transformative view of what society ought to be, that might be pursuing sort of a different set of national goals. So I didn't even really prepare a long entry statement here. But I'm looking forward to doing that today.

Richard Johnson

Absolutely. Thank you so much. And Dr. Swain.

Carol Swain

I'm Carol Swain. I'm a former professor of political science and law at Vanderbilt. I taught at Princeton and was tenured there before I became a professor at Vanderbilt. And I am the author of several books relevant to this discussion of race. My first book, *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress*, won three national prizes and was cited by the U.S. Supreme Court. The book that's most relevant right now is *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenge to Integration*, which was published in 2002 by Cambridge Press. In that book, I warned that if we did not move away from identity politics and multiculturalism, we were headed for the kinds of clashes we see taking place today. And I saw the American national identity as the solution. So I'm looking forward to this discussion because this is a critically important issue and time for our nation.

Richard Johnson

Thank you, and Cathy, how are you? You look wonderful today.

Cathy Young

Thank you very much. This is my first Zoom conference, by the way. So this is a new experience for me. And I'm very, very excited to be here. My understanding was that we're talking partly about the issue of America's national future in the context of the 1619 Project, which the conference is about, but I'm happy to go off in other directions. But I am very interested in identity issues, partly because I'm an immigrant. I came to this country at the tender age of 16 from what was then the Soviet Union. And

my other personal angle on this is that as someone who has followed the fate of the Soviet Union, and then Russia, very closely, I have the, not firsthand, but observational experience of what happens when a country's conception of itself falls apart, which, in that case, was a positive thing. I think we can all say that we're better off for it—the Soviet Union—not being there. But it's been really fascinating and troubling in some ways to see some people basically say that America should engage in the same kind of really radical departure from its identity as, let's say, the Soviet Union did. The 1619 Project was something that I took an interest in just from the standpoint of someone who's interested in history. And I did a piece that I think has been widely cited for *The Bulwark*, which is an online magazine, kind of centrist in its direction, where I was looking at the history behind the quality of the research that went into this project. And I was also looking at what it says and what its conception is for the future of America.

In terms of the title of the panel, "Let America be America Again," I think it's an interesting concept. I also don't know if it's, in a way that's productive, to say let's move back to some imagined Golden Age when everything was wonderful. Obviously, there is no Golden Age, and in some ways, obviously, we have to move forward, not backward. We are clearly a changing nation in terms of demographic diversity. That is very different in that sense from what it was when I was born in 1963, or even when I came here in 1980. But I think that what Carol said about a national identity as an alternative to the splintering of ethnic and multicultural identities is definitely a concept that we should all be looking at today. And obviously, to do that, we also have to look at our history. And my argument would be that American history, for all the imperfections, does provide the philosophical foundation for a national identity beyond race and ethnicity, even if at the time that America was formed most people didn't think of it in those terms. So I

guess let's just take that as the jumping off point.

Richard Johnson

Right, yeah. Absolutely. Thank you. And now we can kind of segue into this. Wilfred, what do you think about America being America again, and also put that in the context of America moving forward? And I have another question for Dr. Swain after that.

Wilfred Reilly

Well, to some very real extent I think that America is America now. One of the things that we have to remember when we look at these clashes between, say black and white, working class and upper middle class, which really underlie a lot of this, is that these brotherly quarrels are quite serious, we shouldn't ignore that, but the United States is literally the richest and most powerful country in the world. So there are very few people even in other mighty nations, China, that wouldn't trade our problems for theirs. It's worth keeping that in mind.

But I think the issue is whether America will continue to be America going forward. And I think, and Cathy probably might agree with this, Carol might have some comments on this as a political scientist as well, but balkanization is a very real threat in large, diverse states. I mean, just look at the Balkans. Nations like Yugoslavia and the USSR that were some of the most powerful countries, our historic rivals, ever to exist, collapsed into what PJ O'Rourke once jokingly called a series of tiny states with names like the republic of you and me, and I'm not sure about me, over recent recorded history. That's a real thing that can occur. And we do obviously want to avoid it here. What you're seeing in the USA right now is to some extent, when you look at the 1619 Project specifically, since that's what we're discussing, a clash about the fundamental ideals of the country. So the

traditional view of the USA among black intellectuals and progressive white intellectuals has been that no one wants to ignore slavery, that the USA has been flawed throughout its history, but it has a set of ideals that is among the best sets of ideals in at least recent human national history. Almost all countries have experienced the sins, if you will, that humanity is prone to. Wars of conquest, abuse of battle captives, enslavement of other persons, and so on. However, we did so within the context of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, what Lincoln once called the silver frame around the apple of gold. And our goal should be remedying the mistakes of the past while recognizing the good that's inherent in the U.S. system. That's been the traditional view. I by and large agree with this.

The 1619 Project to a very real extent is arguing that this is not true. Very, very explicitly. I mean, I've read all of the 1619 essays and they say things like anti-black racism is fundamental within America's DNA. That's a quote. Virtually everything unique about the United States—and they go through this list of things from traffic patterns to our high sugar, high fat diet—comes specifically from the enslavement of black people. Getting past this foundational sin will require massive changes to the country. There's a piece about healthcare that argues that we have a mostly private practice healthcare system because of slavery. By the way, a lot of these claims seem to be empirically untrue. I would refer people to Gordon Wood's analysis, some of the others. I'm not a historian myself, but a lot of this is very debatable. We don't see less traffic in the North, for example, or recently constructed cities than in the older cities in the South. Political science has empirically looked at that, there seems to be no basis for that whatsoever. But the idea is that the thing that makes the USA unique is in fact an evil. It's black slavery. And to overcome that evil, and I presume also the conquest of Native Americans and so on down to the

indentured servitude of the Chinese and the Irish, although that's never really mentioned, it's a little more awkward. To overcome this, we would have to dramatically change who we are as country. So that's the debate.

1619, at least the extremes of Black Lives Matter, Occupy, Antifa, a lot of these movements, are specifically advocating for what traditionally would have been considered un-American goals. As an African American man who plans to be a father in the near future, the one thing I dislike the most is the elimination of the black and I suppose the white nuclear family. That's in the platform for the movement of black lives, as I recall. I looked it up a couple weeks ago, I don't think it's been taken out. But this sort of stuff, we need to go to state kibbutzim instead of family. We're talking about change at this level. So that's the debate. We are America now. But 50 years from now, will we be?

I'll close with a quick stat. I read recently that the majority, not a substantial minority, not a small minority, but the majority of individuals, I believe, under 30 in the USA right now that lean left politically, would like the USA to be a socialist rather than capitalist country; would like us to be majority minority—I don't really have a huge problem that one—and would like us to be essentially disarmed in the context of the Second Amendment within the relatively near future. That's a different country. So if you have a debate about whether the USA should become a disarmed, majority minority, socialistic state going on at fairly high levels, then you have a fundamental clash about the nature of the country.

I think what I consider the “good” side will win. When you look at actual statistics, 81% of African Americans want more police or the same amount in their neighborhood and know someone on the force and so on. I don't think the majority of taxpayers

back some of these ideas. If you actually ask people anonymously off the record, do you think that biological males, for example going a bit afield, should play competitive women's sports? Whichever side you're sympathetic to here, I don't think you'd get a massive majority answering, “Yes.” So I think there's a substantial amount of centrism in the country, support for American traditional ideals. It's true for African Americans, whites, whatnot. But that clash is definitely going to come, and I think I just defined some of the parameters there.

Richard Johnson

Thank you. Dr. Swain, I have a question for you. Looking at the Constitution, and Article One, Section Two of the Constitution, most people have a misconception about the three-fifths compromise. And when you hear out in the general public that black people were not looked at as human beings, they were looked at as less than human beings in the document of the Constitution, how do you respond to that?

Carol Swain

They are clearly repeating something they have heard that's false. And they have been misinterpreting that clause. Anyone who has researched and looked at the discussion, the debate and how the compromise came about, would know that it was about representation in Congress and how many seats the North and the South each would get. Those in the South were perfectly willing to count 600,000 slaves as whole persons, because then they'd get more seats in Congress. It was the anti-slavery North that wanted the restriction. And had they not won and gotten in that three-fifths clause, slavery might have continued even longer. So it was really an anti-slavery action on the part of the North. It's unfortunate that people use that to say that at the time the Constitution was

ratified, blacks were not considered human beings, that they were three-fifths a man. That was not the rationale. It's false.

Richard Johnson

And Lincoln used that argument really to help push forward the abolition of slavery, and this kicked off the Civil War, because basically Lincoln said there is no property in man designated in the Constitution.

Carol Swain

People who want to perpetuate that false narrative just skip over the inconvenient truth. And I really wish that more people would look at American history. You might not like everything you read or see, but at least acknowledge the good that was done. Don't make the nation worse than it actually was or is. The story of America that we are telling through the [1776 Unites consortium](#) is the story of blacks and whites working together to overcome the stain of slavery. Look at the Rosenthal schools, and the black colleges and universities. Those were institutions funded by dollars provided by white Americans who *did* care. There were always whites who agitated against slavery. So there was never a national consensus that slavery was the right thing to do, or that slavery was the moral thing to do. If you look at America's history, you can see it is a Judeo-Christian country; all of our laws were influenced by biblical roots. We lose a lot by skipping over those facts.

Richard Johnson

Absolutely. And I really appreciate you bringing up the Rosenthal adventure between Booker T. Washington and Rosenthal that basically helped to build 5,000 schools in black communities, rural black communities across America.

Cathy, what do you think about going forward?

Can America be America and continue to grow as a nation going forward without losing its identity, and should it lose its identity?

Cathy Young

Of course it can continue going forward. We're at a moment of turmoil that certainly feels unique to us right now because we're in the middle of it. But I've heard a number of people say, and I think there was something to that, that if you look at where we were in the 1960s and even early '70s, in terms of societal turmoil, in some ways even if you look at political violence, there was a huge amount of political violence. There were bombs going off all the time. There were these radical groups that were constantly killing cops. We've had several incidents recently, but it's really not anywhere near the same scale. And certainly the anti-war movement had a lot of people in it who believed in the very, very foundational transformation of the United States. There were a lot of people who were essentially communist or quasi-communist. I think certainly we got through that period in our history and we're still here. And my hope is that we will look back at this as a fascinating period where we did go through a lot of soul-searching. We are, I think, going through that now.

Going back for a moment to the 1619 Project and the issue of coming to terms with the past, there is a kernel of truth in that critique that makes sense, which is a lot of people in America don't know very much about the history of some of the things that happened in this country. And obviously, as Carol said, that includes things like the true nature of the three-fifths compromise. A lot of people, as Carol was saying, do believe that that was stemming from the belief that black people are not complete human beings, and that it was the slavery advocates who wanted that. And of course, it was the exact opposite. At the same time, I don't have a problem with saying that in many

ways we've under-covered, so to speak, the standard education that people get and the sort of exposure that we get to the history of the revolution, etc. We've not paid enough attention in some ways to some of the issues associated with slavery.

When I was doing research for my piece on the 1619 Project, I came across things that were shocking to me. One example where I do think that this is something that should serve as a corrective to the standard view that we get of someone, I was reading about Patrick Henry, who is most famous for the give me liberty or give me death statement. Patrick Henry was also very opposed to the ratification of the Constitution, which when I took classes on American history in college the standard version that we got was that he was this ultra-libertarian guy who was very concerned about the power of government, which, to a certain extent was true. But what I learned is that one of the things that Patrick Henry was most concerned about a government doing was abolishing slavery. And he had this fascinating argument, which is just really twisted. He basically argued that slavery is really, really horrible. And it is, in fact, so horrible that it's impossible to imagine that a federal government would not take action to try to root it out in the states. And if that were to happen, that would be really, really bad for the slaveholding states, and he really did believe that owning slaves was, and he was a Virginian, he believed that owning slaves was essential to the way that Virginia was run. That should maybe add a little wrinkle to the way we see the give me liberty or give me death guy. Maybe that really does severely tarnish his record of being dedicated to liberty. So I think that there are those things that we don't know enough about.

I think there's a lot we could learn that I think does, as Carol and Will were saying, point to cooperation between black and white people even early on. There were soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War,

black soldiers who had been forbidden to enlist, then George Washington was persuaded to change his mind on that. And at one point, there were many, many former slaves, and even current slaves, who joined the Revolutionary Army who believed that they would be getting their freedom. And in many ways they were not treated very well after the war. They did not get the same benefits that, in most cases, white veterans got. So, there's this history of both brotherhood and betrayal. That would be a great title for a book by the way, brotherhood and betrayal. And I think that would be an angle to look at, in terms of black and white relations.

And I don't think there's any problem with becoming aware of these less savory sides of our history. I think we can only be stronger if we look at that. And at the same time, we can see Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson, had a really complicated and fascinating history of both being anti-slavery on a fundamental philosophical level, and especially in the later part of his life really settling into this very rigid attitude that yeah we've made this compromise with slavery, and we really shouldn't mess with that at least for now because that will destabilize the nation. And there, there's some fascinating correspondence where people were asking him in the early 19th century to speak up in favor of abolitionism. When by that time, he was already the former president, and he really just would not do that and would basically say, well, I'm leaving that to the next generation.

Richard Johnson

Yeah. This is good stuff.

Cathy Young

But I think it does also point to the way forward, which is that we can build on understanding all of that, and we can build on the part that was always

very future oriented and very reform oriented.

Richard Johnson

Absolutely, I'm gonna have to jump right in. Carol, I see you want to respond to that.

Carol Swain

Well, Cathy had so much to say. I wanted to respond when she talked about the 1960s, that turmoil of the 1960s. We survived that, and what's taking place today is not quite as bad. I see what's now taking place in the context of a new America, where the Marxists and critical race theorists have gained so much control and power that they are driving a narrative that can be very destructive to the U.S. In the 1960s, America had a stronger religious, spiritual connection as far as its Judeo-Christian foundations. I would argue that more people knew what the country was about. I was born in 1954. That was the year of the Brown v Board of Education case, desegregating schools. I saw those civil rights acts open up opportunities for people like me. And I think that we had a better idea of who and what we were as a nation. But because so many people who were trained as Marxists have been able to take leadership of major institutions, we have a population now that's very ignorant about the Constitution, and about the values and ideals that make America an exceptional nation.

The fact that so many young people think socialism is okay is a danger. So, too, is the fact that a lot of us older people are not standing up at this moment to point out that the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment protects all Americans. The 1964 Civil Rights Act bans discrimination on account of race, ethnicity, and national origins. At this moment we are moving in a direction where we're saying it's okay because of the legacy of slavery to discriminate

against whites or discriminate against people because of their skin color – that we don't want a color-blind society and equality under the law. Those of us who once thought that those were worthy ideals have been silenced. We're not speaking up enough. And that's what I think is wrong with America.

I agree with you, Cathy, about the less-savory beliefs of some of our founding fathers, the fact that they were forebears and were not perfect people. That's fine for people to know that they were imperfect, like the rest of us. But that doesn't change America. And it doesn't change the good these people did; it doesn't mean that monuments ought to be torn down. Yeah, I know that you weren't arguing that. But I think that we can learn from their mistakes, and if we learn from their mistakes, we can be better people and a better nation.

Richard Johnson

Well, is America growing up and are some of these just growing pains of America because we've grown since 1787, and we've come through civil wars, hundreds of thousands of people died in the Civil War, as a part of that growing pain? Then we moved a little bit further and a little bit closer to the true ideals of freedom that's mentioned and talked about in the Constitution. And we came through 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And there was turmoil and growing pains. And here we are 56 years later, going through another growing pain. Are we just growing up?

Carol Swain

I don't think so. I think this lawlessness is a part of a regression.

Wilfred Reilly

Yeah, so the short answer is, this is a potential growing pain. But I don't think we should grow in the direction, as Dr. Swain said during the last comment, that's being suggested here. So the issue with the civil rights movement, if you look at the real historical civil rights movement, 1954, 1964, '67 was that civil rights for African Americans, women, and others didn't really exist. My partner Jane pointed out during a conversation a couple of days ago that she would have needed my approval to get a home loan until 1981. So when you look at first wave feminism, or when you look certainly at that black civil rights movement, the issue was that the fundamental powers and privileges for those groups didn't exist. So our society took what I think was an important necessary step toward moral adulthood by fighting across racial and gender lines, obviously, because the disenfranchised aren't often capable, as brave as they are, of totally freeing themselves to obtain those rights for everyone.

What's being sought right now is a different sort of social change, but one that would fundamentally transform the USA into a different sort of state. I mean, the argument right now that's being made is very, very often if you look at the actual writing of the Green New Deal, for example, an argument for state socialism. For governmental control of major resource sets, if not actual means of production. For increases in tax rates that in practice would put our taxing structure on par with say Sweden's or Norway's and so on down the line. So I think the people that are proposing this, short answer, I think that it's a step we need to take forward to be a mature nation. But I personally hope we don't take it. I think it's an extremely bad idea.

The difference between the civil rights movement of the past and the civil rights arguments today is that civil rights now exist. So one of the things that's

going on here actually has been the redefinition of some of these terms. So racism, and I'd be interested in what the other panelists have to say about this, has historically meant something very simple. It's a dislike of other human beings simply or primarily because of their membership in a particular race. And this has declined dramatically as a construct over the past forty, fifty, sixty years. I don't think anyone would deny that. In political science there's a whole series of anonymized survey questions we ask. Would you vote for someone of a different race? Would you marry them? You know, work for them? So on down the line. And the percentage of people in totally anonymized situations that identify as traditional bigots, in terms of the voting question, for example, last year was 7%. So what we're now seeing is a redefinition of racism to mean something much more broad and diffuse.

If you actually read some of this critical theory, like Ibram Kendi's work, for example, what he's saying is that any system that produces disparate outcomes, differences in how people perform, is racist. He says this really explicitly. The argument is that the only two explanations for the difference, and I think he cited SAT scores in *How To Be Antiracist?*, but the only two explanations for this difference in SAT performance would be, one, the underperforming group is somehow inferior. He means essentially, genetically, deeply, permanently inferior. Or two, the metric being used, even if it's facially neutral, is racist. I would suggest a third option, rates of studying for the test vary dramatically across individuals and groups. But we're now seeing an attempt to redefine racism as any system that doesn't produce total equity among groups. And the claim is that the new civil rights movement is fighting all systems that don't produce total equity among groups. The problem with that is that that would literally be all systems. I don't want to be glib here, but I mean the NBA right now has, I believe, two full time Asian American players,

which I think are Jeremy Lin and somebody else. So if we actually wanted to take these ideas seriously, it would require systemic, total reshaping of the United States. There are people that want that.

I don't think that that is a growing pain we need to endure, I guess would be a simple answer. I don't think we'd get anything good out of that one. As a very quick comment, by the way, about the discussion between Carol and Cathy, which I think was a good one, that just occurred. I think, to agree, points on both sides, but I tend to agree that obviously the clashes today aren't worse in some empirical sense than those of 1968. If you look at levels of white on black violence, I don't think there's a group today that's on a par with the Ku Klux Klan. If you look at levels of black on white violence, I don't think there's a group today that's on a par with the original Panthers, although the overall crime rates are a bit higher today.

I think that the issue though, and Carol touched on this, is that the hard left has been very successful at getting control of systems. This is something that I don't think was true if you're looking at the USA during the Eisenhower era, or even the Nixon era. So 1619's ideas are being taught as curriculum in a very large chunk, probably more than a tenth of American schools. And this goes back to, in political science, some of the Communist theorists like Antonin Gramsci, who said, look, as Reds, the language used at the time, we're not very likely to get control of competitive business or of the military. What we need to do is control the discourse. So we can take what might normally be thought of as fringe ideas and put those out into the public space constantly. And I, frankly, think that's happened. The idea that the USA began 160 years before our actual date of founding, that the thing that defines us is slavery, and that we should reshape everything from the health care system to our traffic circles to deal with this

historical sin would have been considered a very, very fringe idea until quite recently. We hear about this idea, however, today from *The New York Times* or from prominent big city school boards. So I think that this is absolutely an accurate point on Carol's end. Whether or not there are more guys on the streets with signs, I'd say there are fewer of them, we've allowed this to some extent.

I mean, we've allowed higher educational institutions to become places where people conceal the fact that they're conservatives or centrist, which is remarkable when you think about it. I mean, those groups combined are 65% of the country or more. I tend to ramble on with the stats, so that's the last one. But Yale University, a couple of their top quants actually looked at the percentage of conservative professors they thought existed on campus and they got zero percent. You can Google the Yale University zero percent faculty conservative and find out how they ran their model and so on. I have a couple critiques, but it was a pretty good study. But I mean, I do think that that amount of control of discourse—by which I mean academia, the top high schools, the NGO sector, the print media, the broadcast media—by the extreme left, does change the debate a little bit. I think that the issue here though, is that the extreme left, if you look at the number of actual votes for, say, Bernie Sanders, in swing states, any metric you want to use, the number of actual advocates this group has is extremely small. And that limits the reach of what they can do without other people backing them. And that's why there's such an intense focus on guilt-tripping people, in my opinion. But at any rate, yeah, there's an idea that we should move forward, you should make these social changes. I don't think that that's a natural part of growing up. However, that would be a part of, becoming an alcoholic might be an analogy. That would be a change made by an adult society that I disapprove of.

Richard Johnson

And it's interesting, Will, you bring up an interesting point. Is this socialism versus capitalism and democracy, where I'm flying the flag of racism?

Wilfred Reilly

Well, oh, yeah. So you're asking, Yeah, I mean, that's, that's an excellent phrasing of that question. So you're asking, to some extent, is this a Marxist movement using people of color?

Richard Johnson

Yeah, exactly.

Wilfred Reilly

Yes, it is. I mean, this is one of the things that I find. First of all, I mean, I won't deny that there—I think there's sometimes an attempt to hide the fact that there is a racist hard right. I recently wrote up, it's probably going to go up as a monograph on my website, I don't know if I want to publish it as a book, but I wrote a text called *All Wrong*, which is criticism of a lot of this alt right, white nationalism we've seen in recent years. Carol's obviously written one of the defining books in this field. This is a real issue. And if you actually talk to some of these people, they never say, yes, I'm a racist, right? I mean, they always say I'm an America first nationalist, or some such gibberish. And you have to go through 15 minutes of Twitter debate. Why is your profile picture a frog waving an American flag? But leaving that aside, I think that it's probably accurate to say that, in general, normal conservatives are not more racist, using a whole number of metrics, than normal leftists. In fact, the reverse is sometimes the case. So there was a study recently that found that liberals but not conservatives dumbed down everything they say when they talk to black people. That the tone of voice, the length of words literally changes by about

30% when people identified as hard left are talking to an African American. It's one of the funniest pieces of research I've ever read. But I think in that context, comparing the ordinary center right guy who was a soldier or who played some football with the people that are doing this, like, painful, yeah, bro, got some hot sauce in my purse routine. I don't think the second group likes black people more. I think the idea on the part of a lot of hard leftists is that black people, and now by the way, we're being replaced by the legal and illegal largely Latino immigrant population in this role, but we are the lumpenproletariat. If we can be convinced we have these long standing beefs with the white countrymen we sometimes clash with, we can be used as a tool for pushing through these far left policies.

I don't want to focus on fringe issues like the trans debate, but they are a good metric for how far left or right people actually are, in my discipline. If you actually ask some of these questions, like are you a regular weekly or daily churchgoer? Or do you feel that biological males can simply transition to life as women or, for that matter, gay marriage. I'm strongly pro gay marriage, that's not the mainstream position in the black community. You ask normal black people these sorts of things, they're going to give a fairly conservative position. And there are other issues like illegal immigration that, I'm pretty right on this, that openly hurt the black community. If you're talking about an urban working class community, there's no way to deny that. The reason that we have been brought along and are voting in support of some of these issues very much is this idea of well, do you want to support the racists? I mean, and this isn't unique to Donald Trump at all. I mean, when Mitt Romney, who is a milquetoast center right Republican, he wrote part of Bain's diversity statement running for president talking about how he had binders full of women, and I believe minorities as well. A bit awkward, but positive on the diversity front. Joe Biden

said he [Romney] was gonna bring back slavery. He gwine put y'all back in chains, putting on this sort of fake black-cent. And so yeah, I don't. Yes, is the short answer. Obviously, the pitch to the black community is vote for this whole package of things like the Green New Deal, or the racists will be in power and you'll be hanging from trees. And I simply don't think that's realistic, if you're talking about a Mitt Romney presidential administration. That's just nonsense.

Richard Johnson

Carol, how do we get beyond that? Because Will's making a definitely true point about how African Americans have been somewhat hoodwinked here. How do we get beyond that? What's the pathway through? What's the formula?

Carol Swain

I believe that if we keep putting out truth and facts, sooner or later they will sink in. You already see change within the black community. As far as progressives, white liberal progressives, to me, they hate blacks. I know that hate is a strong way to describe what I believe is the relationship between blacks and progressives. But if they didn't hate blacks, why would they be pushing abortion the way they do in black communities? We are aware of the stats that show that, in some cities, more black babies are aborted than are born alive. Progressives push defunding the police, even while they know that blacks are more likely to be victims of crime or perpetrators – that if you live in the inner city, your life is in danger. So there's a reason why 81% of black Americans want more police but progressives say, no, defund the police. Progressives are willing in their cities to use coronavirus as a reason to shut down public schools, knowing that the poorest of the poor or the parents are not going to be able to do the online education. So those minority kids that

are poor, and poor whites as well, will not get an adequate education.

My last bit of evidence showing that progressives hate minorities is with coronavirus. They say that the stats show that people of color are more likely to contract and die of coronavirus, and that we needed to wear masks and social distance. However, these same people encourage minorities to protest and to get out on the streets, and they relaxed the regulations against crowds when it came to black people. So everything I see, in terms of the messaging of the political left, it's *not* life-giving. It's very much destructive. In my experience, including 28 years in academia, the worst racists have been the progressives. They support affirmative action because they think blacks are so stupid that they would not be able to accomplish anything unless it was handed to them. And so they are onboard with segregation. They want blacks segregated, so they are on board with taking and allowing a *re-segregation* in our colleges and universities. That's totally contrary to everything that the Civil Rights Act was about. White progressives are on board with lowering the academic standards for black people, because they don't believe black people are capable of competing. Progressives are our enemies; they're the enemies of black people and our nation as a whole, and equal opportunity.

Cathy Young

Can I jump in here?

Richard Johnson

Go right ahead.

Cathy Young

I just wanted to kind of respond briefly to what Carol said and I definitely do not consider myself a

progressive as that term is currently defined. I would caution against going the same route as some of the race radicals do on the other side in terms of saying, if you advocate for things that I believe negatively affect black people, even if they're seemingly racially neutral, you hate black people. I think it's entirely possible for people to honestly disagree and have different perspectives on some of these things. So I really wouldn't jump to the conclusion that, obviously, some of the people who argue for defunding the police I think they're profoundly deluded, and I think they have a very utopian idea of what's going to happen in the absence of a strong police force, but I don't think that means that they actually actively on some level want more killing of black people in the absence of police. So I think that we should try to not necessarily ascribe nefarious motives to people.

I also wanted to correct something, or at least amend something, that Will said about Joe Biden, he's gonna put y'all back in chains. I actually recently looked up that controversy, and he was ostensibly talking to a mixed audience that did have a lot of African Americans, but was I think, 50/50, white, black. And he was ostensibly talking about loosening bank regulations. And I think the argument there was that Mitt Romney is going to now let all these big banks lord it over you, and there was a controversy about whether that was a racial dog whistle so to speak to use a very popular word right now. And Joe Biden did, in fact, argue that he was not trying to use it as a racial code. Now, whether or not that was true I leave it up to you, but I mean, he, I do want to say that he did not actually say Mitt Romney is going to restore slavery or anything like that. All right.

Various Speakers

[Everyone begins talking over each other]

Richard Johnson

Wait, wait, wait, wait, let me, I have some rules. Everybody continue their statements until the end, and as the moderator, I'll allow others to come in. So Cathy, complete your statement.

Cathy Young

Okay. Right. Thank you. Yeah. I'll be happy to have some back and forth on that. But yeah, I do want to say I think that in terms of where we go from here, I absolutely agree that there has been a weakening of education in terms of historical knowledge of the Revolution, of some of the things that happened around the Civil War, the civil rights movement. So I think we definitely need to have a better educational system. I would once again caution against the kind of idealization of what happened in the past in terms of the knowledge of history until recently. My understanding is, at least in a lot of the southern states, there was a lot of resistance to acknowledgement that the Civil War was about slavery. And I've run into those people online, who will still say, well, actually it really was about states' rights. And I always say, well if you look at the declarations of secession that were passed by the southern states, the right that they were most insistent about, the states' right that they were really hammering on explicitly, was the right to own slaves.* So it's kind of a semantics thing where they were talking about their rights being trampled, but that was mainly the right that they were talking about. I know that until the 1980s there were questions occasionally about schools, again mostly in the South, using literature that really whitewashed, so to speak, the experience of slavery and tried to say, oh, well, actually, it was mostly benign, and most of the slaves were treated well, so it really wasn't that bad. So I think there were real distortions of history kind of in the other direction, ...

Richard Johnson

Cathy, let's keep this to about 30 seconds.

Cathy Young

So I think that's something that we should also not forget. And I think we should move forward and build on that. And I mean, I think the 1619 Project, some of the essays I thought had a lot of interesting information. I learned a lot of interesting things researching based on the 1619 Project that I didn't know about us. Certainly, there were serious misconceptions. [Phone rings] Sorry about that. I'm just ...

Richard Johnson

While you're grabbing that why don't we bring Carol in. Cathy, why don't we bring Carol in so she can respond?

Carol Swain

I can say that Cathy can easily fill up an hour lecture, and she's not going to have any problem.

I purposely use the expression "hate," knowing that it's very strong. When I look at what progressives have done to blacks . . . I was born and raised in Virginia, and as a young adult a lot of my cousins were among those sterilized when they got pregnant as teens. They went into the hospital and, while these young women were giving birth, the doctors presented them with paperwork, and so these young women were sterilized. And then later when they got married, they wanted to have children. But they had been sterilized. Virginia was one of the states where the sterilization took place. It's always been governed by progressives. Everything that I've seen that's come from progressivism has been strongly anti-black. And so I'm using the expression "hate" because when you actually look at what has taken place, I see the same kind of hate that came from the KKK. It has

changed form. It's the same thing, but it has changed form. I grew up in the segregated South. I started off at segregated schools. And I have watched all of this. That's where I'm coming from with my observations about what I see in the world. And Cathy, coming from a different culture and background, I think that's why we differ on the things that we differ about. Now I'm going to use something from the critical-race theorists. I have had *lived* experience.

Richard Johnson

All right, we've got a couple of questions from the audience. And one is, what are the civil rights for an extended republic?

Wilfred Reilly

All right, that's a good question. Now, just very quickly about the most recent back and forth exchange. I think it's important not to be too painfully reasonable in that center right space. I mean, so Cathy's absolutely right, Joe Biden denied he was race baiting. I mean, that is valid, and Cathy should probably have noted it. But what he did was look at, I believe the front of the audience was mostly African American, and say something along the lines of put you back in chains, if you know what I mean. He's going to put you back in chains, people stood up, started clapping. I don't think Joe Biden was just referring specifically to international banking regulations in the minds of the people that responded. But if you want to use an alternate quote there, and then good points on all sides, we'll move on from that exchange. Joe Biden specifically said if you don't vote for me and the Democrats, you ain't black, when

Cathy Young

I agree with you. That's that was bad. I totally agree.

Wilfred Reilly

Last one, he also said I really believe poor kids can be just as smart as white kids. I mean, Joe Biden would be viewed as more, Joe Biden's actual behavior on race, and I think both of these guys, I don't think politicians should really be on Twitter, by the way, a side point. But I mean, both of these guys have let their mouths fire off quite a bit. But Joe Biden's comments on race, what was the exact quote? They may have been segregationist, but they got stuff done, something like that. That is a paraphrase. You know, poor kids are just as smart as white kids. The thing about Corn Pop and the chain fight, Joe Biden's actual conversations about race in terms of awkwardness are easily on a par with Trump's, in my opinion, with maybe one or two exceptions. The heuristic for Joe Biden, however, is he is a centrist Democrat so he is good on race. So he called one of the country's top black TV journalists a junkie. Or if we're being very specific, he asked him if he was a junkie. He asked him if he had taken a cognitive test. He said of you ...

Richard Johnson

Let's respond to the audience a little bit and make sure that we ask those questions. I appreciate your response.

Wilfred Reilly

I do think, as a political scientist, these heuristics are important. Republicans greedy, Democrats nice. Anyway.

But so the question, what civil rights do you need for an extended republic? I think that we have most of them in place, actually. So the Civil Rights Act of 1964 essentially removed the right to private bigotry to some extent. The general assumption in the USA was always that you could be a racist jackass in your personal life, and in any business practice that was an extension of that. Excuse me. So if you had a golf

club, for example, if you had a roadside barbecue restaurant, black or white, so on down the line, you were free to exclude African Americans, gay people, Caucasians, whatever the case might be. The Civil Rights Act very specifically says that in terms of accommodations, hiring, and workplace activity, so on down the line, you almost can't discriminate, at least if you're talking about race, color, ethnicity, nationality, sex, so on down the line. There's now a series of supplementary laws that have moved sexual orientation, essentially, to this category. So beyond that, I don't really see that you need—essentially the Bill of Rights plus the Civil Rights Act is an excellent foundation. I don't think you necessarily need substantially more civil rights as a baseline than those.

I think that the real debate here is about equality versus equity, by the way. So right now I think everyone in the USA is fairly equal in terms of their ability theoretically to compete. If you took a black immigrant from Nigeria and a white immigrant from Bosnia and put them both in the same entry level, post college, \$30,000 a year job, they would have probably very, very similar outcomes in life. I don't actually think this is particularly disputed by people. Sniderman and Carmens, I believe, looked at this.

There are two issues with this. One is that because of past racism, and Cathy's right, we can't ignore some of the things that have gone on in American history. There are groups, even going beyond African Americans or southern poor whites, Native Americans on reservations come to mind, there are groups that have not traditionally had the same access to resources. They're starting from a much lower base. That's problem one when it comes to encountering total equality. You can go to college as a Native American Indian, in fact, you have an enormous advantage applying to most colleges, if we're being blunt. But are you going to have the same percentage chance of doing so coming from a reservation background?

That's issue one.

And issue two is that even in totally fair competitions people perform differently. People get different LSAT scores because some people are smarter than other people. That's the primary mechanism. I don't think there are many communities where you can't walk down to the library and open up a book. So the civil rights that we have guarantee already rough equality among equal people in competitive terms. The question is, what do we do about the harms of the past? I mean, if you look at the Indian Wars 150 years ago, this has nothing to do with most modern white or black Americans. But how do we equalize that to be fair? That's question one. And question two is what do we do about the fact that in a totally fair system, different groups perform differently? If you look at different groups of middle class immigrants that come here from other countries that have no exposure to our past history, they range from the highest earning groups in the country, Indian Americans, to the lowest earning groups in the country, like, for example, Somali Americans. And obviously many Somali Americans would have some claim to refugee status, so it's not a fully equal competition. But what do you do when in an equal race facilitated by civil rights people perform differently? And that, I think, is what leads to the equity argument. And I would be interested in sitting down, and I'll issue this almost as a challenge, but with a well-intentioned critical race theorist and talking about this. What is the solution? Should college admissions be solely by lottery? I've debated people like Rod Graham that are great guys and talked about some of this, but I've never really heard an answer to it.

But at any rate, I think that the civil rights you need in an extended republic like ours, democratic baseline, but obviously, elements of republican structure, such as the Senate, the Electoral College, are to some extent the civil rights we have. We're not an un-

successful country. The problem, to say the least, the problem is that those civil rights have not produced utopia. What do you do about the fact that meritocracy tends to produce very different outcomes for people based on performative skill? That's a question humans have yet to answer.

Richard Johnson

Dr. Swain, there's another question for you here. And it is, how can you get your voice heard in left leaning America? And could you get an op-ed published in *The New York Times*?

Carol Swain

When I was a Democrat, I could get an article published in *The New York Times*. I don't know about that today. I don't think we can make them give us a platform. But if we are loud enough and we reach enough people through other means, we have to bypass some of the established channels. And if we are having the kind of impact that we would want to have, I think they will eventually come to us. I don't think they can always exclude their critics. For myself, if I can influence people, because I know through my social media that there are people from left-leaning organizations that follow me. I think that's the best that we can hope for at this time.

Richard Johnson

For social media?

Carol Swain

I'm just saying we can't force the liberal media to publish our opinion pieces. But if they follow us through social media, they are hearing what we have to say. I think we can have an impact. Yesterday I gave an interview to a *Washington Post* reporter. I don't know

if the article has been published or if he actually cited me. I think he did because he read quotes from a talk I gave at the Council on National Policy. I always take the phone calls of liberal reporters. I never turn down invitations. I would go on CNN or MSNBC, or any of those networks, if I were invited.

Richard Johnson

Thank you so much.

Cathy, here's a question that the audience is posing to you. Explain the emphasis on multiculturalism versus assimilation, and the problems of defining America.

Cathy Young

That's a really great question. I think multiculturalism, and it's kind of interesting by the way, just as an aside, it's interesting that you don't really actually hear the word multiculturalism anymore that much. I think it was very much in vogue in the 1980s, 1990s. And today, there's almost a kind of degree among the left, there's an advocacy of something different, of basically this kind of cultural—because multiculturalism really presumes maybe that you focus on or take in the heritage of different cultures, but also you all come together in that context and different people bring their own cultures to that mix. So, it's not exactly like assimilation into the eastern Anglo European based American culture. But there is still a commonality. And today, on the left, there is really an advocacy of a far greater degree of cultural balkanization, where we hear arguments that cultural appropriation is wrong. For Halloween, if you dress up in the costume of somebody with a different heritage, if you're a white person who dresses up as, let's say, Mulan, you should not be allowed to do that because you're appropriating the heritage of another culture. Or if you're a white novelist who writes a book with

black characters, you're appropriating the voice of these black characters.

There was a fascinating incident a couple of years ago, in which *The Nation*, which is a leading progressive magazine, published a poem by a white writer that was in the voice of a homeless black woman and was written in African American vernacular. And people were just outraged because this is this white guy, who is stealing the voice of a black woman, and this is crazy.

So I think we've gone even beyond multiculturalism. So I think the need for an argument for a common culture is very important right now. And that doesn't mean that different ethnic groups don't have their own subcultures, as I think that's always been true. So I think that's sort of the melting pot metaphor from the 20th century, where we all kind of bring different things to that communal culture. And I think that's really what we should look to which doesn't necessarily mean a melting pot in the sense that we all completely lose any sense of ethnic identity. That's never really been true in America. Different groups have different levels of ethnic self-identification. Like there's never, for instance, been a really strong French American identity from France. On the other hand, if you look at Italian Americans, that's a group that historically always has had a pretty strong ethnic identity. Irish American, lots of different groups have been very American while having a strong sense of ethnic identity. So I don't think there's anything wrong with that, *per se*. I think the thing that we really do need to recover, is that, first of all, there is beyond all of that, there is a common American identity and also that no one really owns any culture. I mean you can be a proud Italian American, but that doesn't mean that you're going to freak out if somebody who's not Italian makes spaghetti.

Richard Johnson

To that point, let's bring Carol in because I know she wants to chime in on that discussion with you.

Carol Swain

I want to chime in because someone has a question about the bias response teams that more than 200 colleges have, for reporting alleged biases. I think it's very important for conservatives to use those processes that institutions have set up. When it comes to racially quote "insensitive" comments in the classroom, if you, as a white male or a white female, if you're singled out and told that you're the root of all evil and your ancestors are responsible for their sins, and that you are a racist and all of those things, because you believe in the traditional family you're a homophobe, or all of those names, I think it's very important that when we see bias against us as Christians or conservatives or white people, that we report them if they are violating their own rules. I'm not white, but I'm sympathizing with you folks who experience this. We need to hold our enemy accountable to his own rulebook that came from Saul Alinsky. We need to be steeped in Saul Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals" and use our knowledge to our advantage. And so they've set up these systems for reporting bias. Yes, report bias, record it, keep records and just make them live up to their own edicts.

Richard Johnson

Will, Cathy mentioned something. She said common culture. Does the flag supply itself as a symbol for common culture, Americanism?

Wilfred Reilly

I think that a basic affection for the flag is a sign that the teaching of common culture has worked. Obviously, to some extent, the symbols are just that. They're symbols. I mean, at root a flag is our symbol

on a piece of cloth. If my house were on fire, I would rescue my pets, valuables, make sure my partner was okay. I don't think, as patriotic as I am, I'd go back in and grab the flag. But I mean, at the same time, if I saw a flag on the ground walking through the downtown of a city that happened to be ours, or even that of an allied nation, I'd probably pick it up, whereas I wouldn't for most other banners. So that sort of basic affection, not hating your country, is a good sign that cultural training, conditioning—if you want to be blunt—has worked.

What does a shared culture mean? I think Cathy did a good job defining that. In political science we do look at that in detail. And there are a couple of elements. Traditionally, America has been the first democracy. So there's a great deal, sometimes to almost an excessive degree but probably productive, of veneration for our founding fathers' core principles, ideas. So there's the Constitution, there's the Declaration of Independence, so they're part of our culture as the first modern democracy. Obviously, of course, there were democracies in ancient Greece, smaller ones locally around the world. Part of our cultural idea is that we're the capitalist democracy. So there's that whole Horatio Alger tradition, the idea that here government doesn't provide everything. People go compete. You can be successful. Go west young man. That's very much a part of what's taught in the schools. I mean, there are economics and business courses in some of our high schools, I took some of them as a senior.

We're the destination democracy. For all our racial quarreling, I don't think anyone would deny that immigrants have made up the majority, almost the entirety, of the population of this country. It's widely accepted that you might take some harassment when you first get here, but people who come from anywhere in the world become American: Russians, Italians—and that's very much part of our culture. If you

come here from Ireland and you stay here for fifteen years, you are an American, you're an Irish American. Thinking of some of my travels on business, if you go to Japan for fifteen years, and you stay there and you're popular enough in your community, you're not Japanese. You will never be Japanese. You will be a respected foreign guest of Japan that might be asked to leave under certain circumstances.

So those are three elements of our culture: the founding tradition, the capitalist ethos, the welcoming, for all the caveats, of immigrants, and then there's a popular shared culture. I don't think I could name an American male who didn't know, or female for that matter, who didn't know what the Super Bowl was. We're now doing more narrowcasting than broadcasting. But if I go in to work at a historically black college for that matter, the number of people that have watched Game of Thrones when that was the concluding season—that were aware of the major moments in our culture at that time—was 60, 70%. So that's what a shared culture means. An awareness of history, an awareness of certain traditions or respect for styles. I mean, I'm wearing a blazer from the store chain, Brooks Brothers, not a kimono. I mean no disrespect to that alternative style. But that's what American culture means. And the training in all of that is represented by the flag, to some extent. So I think if you see someone urinating on their national flag, or burning it or doing some of the things you see at these rallies, that is a sign—I view those actions as immoral, but whatever your position on the ethics of that, that's a sign that the cultural training given to that person has failed pretty notably. And I think cultural training, in a relatively good society such as ours, is a good idea. This gets back to multiculturalism versus diversity. You can have a bunch of people that look different, and in fact, I greatly enjoy that, I'm a fan of diversity in social environments, but you can't have a group of people that totally think differently about everything to the point of clashing about

foundational ideas, and succeed for long as a society.

Richard Johnson

And I know that our time is winding down. So I have a question for each one of you and take your time as you go and respond to this. Are we in trouble? Is America in trouble of not being America anymore? And I'll start with you Carol.

Carol Swain

I would say absolutely, yes, that America is teetering on the edge of a precipice. I've said it many times. Back in 2002 I published *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenge to Integration*, and I talked about how the left's arguments in favor of identity politics and multiculturalism were very destructive in the long run because they provided a justification for every group, including white Americans, to identify by race, and to advance white interest and white identity, and that the only way we would save a nation as diverse as America was, one, to respect everyone's rights. And that goes back to the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th amendment, the 1964 Civil Rights Act and its protections. But we have to move away from identity politics, where everyone is trying to advance the perceived interests of their group. We have to look to that American national identity where we advance the interests of all.

We also have to open up a dialogue, go back to the Constitution, and give teeth to the First Amendment. I was told when my book was published that the people that were white nationalists didn't deserve to be heard. I believe that what you don't know *can* hurt you. And to the extent that there's some very legitimate issues that relate to black crime, racial preferences, liberal immigration policies, and we can go down the list of, globalization, all of these things affect all Americans. If we don't have politicians who

are willing to address these issues, you will have simmering grievances among the people. They will listen to those who they feel are representing them. As long as we have black race leaders out there, and Black Lives Matter, we will have exploitation of race. I see the Black Lives Matter organization as very much akin to the KKK. If the Southern Poverty Law Center actually tracked hate groups and hate organizations, they would have Black Lives Matter included. And if you look at the hate crimes, the black-on-white hate crimes – but we don't call them hate crimes – I think they would be astronomical. When I hear the director of the FBI say that white supremacists are the greatest domestic threat, I don't see them committing at this point in time the heinous crimes that I read about every day that have taken place against whites, where people are targeting white people and white police, solely because they are white.

I think to the extent that we turn a blind eye to these things, we set ourselves up for that opening scene of a book by William Paris called *The Turner Diaries* that the FBI said was the Bible of the racist right, the book that Timothy McVeigh had in his car when he was arrested. It is about a race war. And the opening scene had to do with this progressivism that had taken over the country, and there was so much violence. I feel like we are living through the opening chapter of *The Turner Diaries*. And people better wake up. If we don't get this law-and-order situation under control, our nation is doomed. And if we don't stop allowing the critical race theorists and the Marxists to use diversity – I always want to say “exclusion” – diversity, equity, inclusion training, all of which is Marxist critical theory indoctrination to divide us, that will also destroy our nation. We don't need that kind of training. What we do need in America is training that will bring us together, unity training, the *E Pluribus Unum*, out of many one, we need to get back to our American motto. And that's all I have to say about that.

Richard Johnson

All right. Cathy? And then we'll bring Wilfred in.

Cathy Young

Okay, yeah, are we in trouble? I agree with some of Carol's prescriptions, I think it's absolutely imperative to move beyond identity politics and move toward unity. I don't think the situation is quite as dire as Carol suggests. I think the violence that we're seeing is certainly very concerning. It's not quite as rampant as one might think, even if you look at places like Portland. I'm very concerned about what's going on there, but I have talked to people who live in Portland, and this stuff is really focused on a few blocks in a very large city. And apparently, if you live like five blocks away you may not even know that anything bad is going on. We really don't need to overdramatize.

I would also say I certainly have issues with a lot of the ideological postulates of Black Lives Matter. But I also think that most people who claim to be supporting that movement really do not support any of that ideology, I think they just think in terms of we need to stop police brutality against black people. And I do think that we need to reframe that whole discussion, but anyway so I'm just putting in a small plea against overdramatization. I do think that we need to kind of tamp down the polarization that has been happening in this country and get back to a dialogue with each other. I think that's a very important part. I think we need to stop screaming at each other and start talking.

I would also say, if I have a minute, I want to add a really short comment here that takes us back a little bit to the 1619 Project, which, again, is the kicking off point for this discussion. I think it's very important for people to know American history. It's also important for people to learn something about the history of world civilizations, to understand that some of

those things that we're now being asked to see as sort of uniquely American evils are really not. I mean slavery, for instance, is the norm in most of human history. And a lot of these things that we're talking about like, even if you look in terms of slavery in the relatively modern era, American slavery, as terrible as it was, was actually not as inhumane in its practices as the slavery in some of the British colonies, the islands, the really horrible slavery, that was happening in some of the sugarcane dominated economies, where a lot of the time the slaves were basically worked to death. They generally had a very short life expectancy. And that's not to downplay the evils of American slavery, it's to say if you want to say that it was somehow uniquely horrible, if you put things in perspective, I think it is important to know the history of the world and the history of other cultures. So that would also be part of my plea.

So I think that we definitely need to restore a solid foundation for education, we need to bring back some solid standards for learning history. And again, not to say that we need to be going back to the past, I think we need to move forward but also on a solid foundation of both civic and historical education.

And lastly, I want to say something about one of the interesting things about a common American identity. One of our foundational values, of course, is individual autonomy. So it's kind of ironic that our ideal is the sort of commonality of individualists. And I think that's something to remember as we go forward. And I think it's in reclaiming our individuality and our ability to think for ourselves and to have to affirm our individual autonomy that we also move forward to a kind of American commonness. And that would be my closing observation there.

Richard Johnson

Will, your thoughts?

Wilfred Reilly

Yeah, a lot of good stuff in the past two comments. I mean, my short version, is America in trouble? My answer would be we'll probably get through it, but yeah. The country is hundreds of years old. We've survived throughout that span of time. But we are facing again some pretty serious, potentially existential, challenges. I mean, mass immigration in the absence of assimilation has destroyed great nations before. Balkanization, if you look at Yugoslavia, has destroyed, to some extent the USSR, has destroyed great nations before. Communism, in particular, the extreme of socialism, has failed everywhere it's ever been tried. So those are some of the things that are challenges coming up down the road. I think we'll beat them. America's got a pretty good record of success. I have a great amount of confidence in the country. I'm a proud American.

I will say, and there is a backlash to a lot of the nonsense that we are seeing today, I will say. I mean, Carol and I are both involved with the 1776 project or initiative, which is to a great extent a nonpartisan response from the black and allied business and social science and so on communities to 1619. I mean, we've recently designed an educational curriculum, which in a blatant plug you can find at 1776unites.com. But I do think that the silent majority of normal people is going to push back against, and defeat a lot of the things we've been arguing about today. And there have been a couple of pleas for peace made here. I'll close with something of the same but also a note.

I recently helped a feminist friend researcher with some of the stats for a piece about runaway girls. Should be coming out fairly soon. Essentially, what a lot of these kids said was that they were shocked and horrified that their lives got worse when they

left home. They'd been used to one set of events, and they believed nothing could be worse. And when they ran away to the big city, which in a surprising number of cases was Portland or Seattle, by the way, they were amazed to find that their dad was verbally abusive, but so was the drug dealer or sex trafficker or whatnot that they ended up working for. Many, many things are worse than the happy middle class norm that individuals are used to in the USA, and that they hate. So many, many things. I think that virtually anyone who came to this country, even from a solid stable state like Mexico or Poland, could tell you what some of them are. So when we look at the alternative that's being provided by some of these activists out there in street, I would encourage people just to Google the images of CHAZ / CHOP. After it was recaptured by the police, the small quasi-republic that was set up in Seattle, it was just urine soaked streets and tents in front of businesses. They hadn't, no one there apparently had a background in construction, they hadn't managed to construct any temporary housing. There were no statues that were still standing. But there were a bunch of the plinths that they'd been built on with maybe a foot left, everything was covered in graffiti, all the windows were broken. That, to some extent, is the alternative if we allow radicals with an average age of 26 to try to dramatically change society based on this Marxist model.

So if you have issues with the United States, to anyone listening, and I notice there's a fairly good-sized audience at the bottom of the screen, there are 100 ways to deal with that, from voting to running for office to the entire list that's been reiterated over and over again. I would encourage people to pursue those, rather than pursuing things that have always failed historically, every single time they've been tried. And I think that most people will. I tend to be an optimist. We've been very successful in this country. But in the words of one of the founding fathers, once

again, we have to hang together, or we'll certainly all hang separately.

Richard Johnson

Thanks. And as we prepare now to just close out this session, and it's been a wonderful session and lively discussion. Thank you all three of our panelists. One final thought about one minute each on teaching civics in K through 12, and teaching civics in a true form in higher ed, is it needed now more than ever?

Carol Swain

It is definitely needed. And in Tennessee we have an organization called the 912 Society, and they give copies of the Constitution to eighth graders in every school across the state. And I believe it's expanded to three states. We need that basic knowledge. Students need to know the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution. They need to focus on the Bill of Rights and our historical foundations, which I would argue are Judeo-Christian.

Richard Johnson

Cathy?

Cathy Young

Yes, absolutely. I think that we definitely need more civic education. We need it. And I think my focus would be somewhat different than Carol's in that I would argue we need a more kind of enlightenment based civic education. We need to—people need to be familiar with at least some of the framework of John Locke, for instance, and some of the thinkers who really gave the foundation for the Declaration of Independence and for the Constitution, and really, for the Revolution. As part of civics we need to learn to have a more thorough understanding of American history in our schools. I think that should include, for

instance, the contributions of the black community to our history from the beginning, and the struggle over abolitionism, and the struggle to extend full citizenship to different groups. And I think again, there may be some elements of the 1619 Project in terms of black history that I think could be incorporated into that. There are certainly parts of that project that provide a very false understanding of American history, and I think could do actual harm in terms of this idea that everything that makes America unique, as was said here, it comes from slavery. And I think that's a really, really deeply wrongheaded idea. So yeah.

And, to recap, I think we definitely need more solid civics that looks at the bad, but also focuses on the things that enable us to move forward.

Richard Johnson

Will, your final thoughts?

Wilfred Reilly

Yeah, we need more civics education. In fact, I think that in our schools we need more solid education in most practical skills. I mentioned economics and some training in business. I think, understanding basic stats. If you look at, for example, the tiny rate of interracial crime in the USA, what these police numbers, these white on black numbers, black on white numbers really mean, would greatly calm tensions in the country. A lot of Americans don't really understand numbers very well. The average American thinks 9% of the population died from COVID, for example. So I think that there's a tendency for people to seek out these sort of messianic solutions, like what we need is utopian communism. I'm almost exactly the opposite. If you asked me to define my sort of brand of kind of center right, business conservatism, I like stuff that works. Yeah, of course, we should teach kids civics. Of course, that should

include black history, and then we should send him to economics class. That's what the school should be doing, as opposed to a bunch of fluffy nonsense, teaching people to become revolutionary poets. There aren't many jobs in that field.

Richard Johnson

All right. Thank you. Thank you, and thank all the panelists. This has been wonderful. It's been a great opportunity for me to moderate this panel. I've had a lot of fun with it. I'm Dr. Richard Johnson with the Texas Public Policy Foundation. I direct the Booker T. Washington Initiative with the foundation. And we do have our next lecture coming up at 2:00 pm. Slavery and Liberation: Defying the Power of Legree's Ghosts. And that's William B. Allen, professor of political science at Michigan State University and emeritus dean, James Madison College. Thanks to all of you for being with us. We've had a wonderful time, and I'll turn it back over to Chance.

Chance Layton

Alright, everybody, thank you. We're gonna close off now. I hope you guys are all able to join the next session at 2:00 pm Eastern time. Bye, everybody.

Richard Johnson

Guys, I really appreciate you.

Carol Swain

Bye, thank you.

Cathy Young

Thank you. Thank you. It's been great.

The Spirit of the Adam's Family

Susan Hanssen

David Randall

Hello, this is David Randall, Director of Research at the National Association of Scholars, with the somewhat unexpected news that our speaker Susan Hanssen does not seem to be on at the moment. We're not quite sure what's happened. There's a possibility that the time zone got confused. Although we thought we had that straight. My apologies. I believe, with any luck, she should be—oh, she's going to be on in two seconds. It was a time zone confusion. All right, everybody, Susan Hanssen should be appearing momentarily. We are now getting some of the problems of things being digital. Even with the bits about the proper time zones, there does seem to be the odd confusion. We will make this even more explicit going forward. However, I will entertain you until Professor Susan Hanssen shows up, ideally, in a minute or so.

I will, I think, so as not to waste your time, do the introduction to Professor Susan Hanssen now, who will therefore be introduced without knowing how we've introduced her. Therefore I will start by talking about her long service in Vietnam. No, I don't think that's true. Let me see. Professor Susan Hanssen, who is as I say being introduced now, without her being here, but she will be appearing shortly. Professor Susan Hanssen is Associate Professor and Chair of the history department at the University of Dallas, a small Catholic liberal arts college. For 20 years she has taught American Civilization on their Dallas campus during the regular school year, and Western Civilization on their Rome campus in the summer. She received her PhD in British and American History from Rice University in Houston. She has taught for the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation at Georgetown University, and as a fellow at the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University. She has published articles on GK Chesterton, Henry Adams, and the history of liberal arts education. She has

been interviewed by Fox and Friends about bias in the AP United States history curriculum, Sky News on race riots in Dallas, and EWTN on the canonization of St. John Henry Newman. And, oh, hello. And part of her specialty is also the Adams family in early America. Professor Hanssen, I've been introducing you. Let me, may I just hear you speak a sentence?

Susan Hanssen

Yes. Hello, it's very good to be here. Sorry, I was running a few minutes late.

David Randall

Yes, and again, we tried to make clarifications earlier about time zone, if something was falling down on the NAS, I apologize to you and the audience. I just introduced you. I'll just say briefly, we are having these all week long, to everybody. You can log on both directly via the Eventbrite or via live on our Facebook and YouTube channels. You can listen right now. And everything is being recorded and going up within the day. So everybody can see Professor Hanssen, everybody else, you know, within 24 hours. I'll just say so... people should be sending in questions via the question and answer or chat. I will be looking at them, also Professor Hanssen if you want to look at them directly, but also, I will just pass them on to you when you're done with your speech. And I'll just go to you right now.

Susan Hanssen

Great. So thank you very much for having me as a part of this ongoing project, this sort of multi-sponsored project to respond to this *New York Times* attack on 1776 as the founding date of the United States of America, giving us a founding that is conceived in liberty. And instead, they're proposing that we should think of 1619 as the founding date for the

United States of America because they argue that America was actually founded on slavery, that American prosperity was all founded on the labor of slaves. And so we have gotten together a group of historians to discuss that, to take that proposition seriously. Because obviously slavery is a serious part of our national history. And yet we want to help our audience, help other historians and faculty members, perhaps teachers in high school or teachers in an elementary school, or just the general public, to have a better-informed patriotism.

So I wanted to speak today about the spirit of the Adams family, and in some sense, what the Adams family in particular brought to the spirit of 1776. So there is a long standing tradition in the teaching of the American founding, to think of us as having founding brothers. The title of a book by the famous, or infamous, Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers*, the idea that there's a kind of constellation of founders, so there's a complexity to the American founding. The American founding is not a monolithic episode, it takes place in a series of actions.

We have, first of all, the Declaration of Independence, which we usually think of as being penned by Thomas Jefferson. But of course, it was written in a committee that Benjamin Franklin and John Adams also participated in. And then of course, it was signed by all the signers of the Declaration of Independence. And so all of those signers of the Declaration of Independence can be considered, in some sense founders. And so we need to look sometimes at the *Forgotten Founders*, a wonderful book by an author named Dreisbach. So in order to understand the complexity of the spirit of the American founding in 1776, we need to recognize that there were a lot of people who participated in the American founding.

Of course, there are then all of the men and women who participated in various ways throughout the

Revolutionary War from 1776 to 1783. And then we have the period of the Articles of Confederation when we were governed under the Articles of Confederation. And that was a very inefficient and ineffective government in many ways. But one of the major achievements of that period was the Northwest Ordinance. And I think that's an often forgotten element of the American founding, but it is one of our founding texts. And the Northwest Ordinance refused to allow slavery to move into the western territories. And that established a precedent that predated the Constitution, a precedent that the Whigs, a precedent that the Republicans, really took their stand on in the compromise of 1820 and in the compromise of 1850. It was a very important document to Abraham Lincoln and thinking about America growing westward, without the extension of slavery, growing westward as an empire for liberty, fundamentally, and laying the groundwork for a gradual ending of slavery and emancipation from slavery.

And then, of course, we have the Constitutional Convention, everyone who was involved in the Constitutional Convention. And then all of those who were in the ratifying conventions of all of the states and those who wrote the state constitutions because, of course, the United States of America has both a federal and a state level.

So the American founding is an incredibly complex event. And I think, to simplify the spirit of 76, and to simplify it down to just this one point, that it failed to immediately eradicate slavery in every state where it existed, is to misunderstand the complexity of human history. So within that context of a complex American founding with a group of American founders, I want to speak particularly about the Adams family, in order to give the Adams family their due.

Now, this is an Adams family project, and has been

from the beginning. John Adams was always a little bit jealous of George Washington being the *solo pater patriae*, the sole Father of the Fatherland, that he was the one polestar who had been the sword of the revolution, as the leader of the Continental Army. That he was our first American president and unanimously reelected president. That he had been the silent presence at the Constitutional Convention. An unusually tall man, a very wealthy man with the largest library in the American colonies. And that he had achieved, George Washington had achieved what no other southern slave holding planter had accomplished, which was to free his slaves at his death, giving each of them enough property and an education in order to support themselves. So the Adams family was always very aware that George Washington held a kind of primacy of place among the founding brothers. He's very much the founding father. He was a kind of ideal of virtue for even the other American founders.

So perhaps there are the great three, George Washington, and then on either side, the pen of the revolution, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, who's very much an important architect of the Constitution. So where do the Adams come in, to give the Adams family their due in the spirit of 76? And what did they contribute to the idea that 1776 is a moment when America was conceived in liberty?

I tend to think of the Adams not just in terms of John Adams, the participant in the American founding and our second president, but I think of all of the Adams family, the Adams family through the centuries, which in some sense also helps us to realize that America is an ongoing project trying to live up to its American founding ideals, which is very much the mentality that the Adams had with regards to the American founding. So I like to think of the Adams as America's first political dynasty. There's a wonderful book by Richard Brookhiser, called *America's First*

Dynasty, about the Adams family. And it gives you John Adams, his son John Quincy Adams, his son, Charles Francis Adams, and his son, Henry Adams. So John Adams is most important in the American founding as the Ambassador to Great Britain, helping to negotiate the treaty at the end of the American Revolutionary War. He is the diplomat of the American founding. So if we have George Washington, the general of the American founding, Thomas Jefferson, the pen of the American founding, Madison as the constitutional constructor of the American founding, then John Adams is very much the diplomat of the American founding. And his son, John Quincy Adams, also became Ambassador to Great Britain, helping to negotiate the Treaty of Ghent at the end of the war of 1812, which was very much viewed by the Adams family as our second war for independence against Great Britain, where we asserted ourselves once again against British naval power in the Atlantic.

And he went on to become Secretary of State and his son, John Quincy Adams's son, Charles Francis Adams, also became Ambassador to Great Britain under Abraham Lincoln. He was Abraham Lincoln's man in London during the American Civil War, making sure that the British did not come into the Civil War on the side of the cotton growing, slave-holding South. And then Charles Francis Adams, his son was Henry Adams, who became the historian of the family. Looking back at John Adams, looking back at John Quincy Adams's time as Secretary of State under Madison and Monroe in his history of that period, looking back at his father, Charles Francis Adams and his action in the midst of the Civil War, and being kind of the historian of the family looking back.

Now, I teach Henry Adams's great memoir, which is in some sense, a memoir both of himself and his family, called *The Education of Henry Adams*, which is

one of the greatest nonfiction works of American literature of the 20th century. And Henry Adams, looking back at the American Founding, said that even though all of the other founding brothers of 1776, this constellation of founders is the way he describes it, a constellation of stars in the sky. And he says at different times they shift their position in the night sky, and sometimes you admire Thomas Jefferson, and other times you don't admire Thomas Jefferson. And sometimes you admire Alexander Hamilton and sometimes you don't admire Alexander Hamilton. Sometimes you admire Benjamin Franklin and other times you don't admire Benjamin Franklin. These were human beings. We don't have a divine founder of the United States of America. We don't think it was founded by the gods. It was founded by a pantheon of flawed human beings.

And, nevertheless, Henry Adams, looking back, continued that great American tradition of, particularly expressing admiration for George Washington, as the Father of his Fatherland, the Father of his country, because he had somehow managed to get himself out of debt, and managed to free his slaves in a way that he thought would give them a dignified life. He didn't think that freeing his slaves, George Washington didn't think that freeing his slaves and leaving them destitute, casting them on the public welfare, casting them on the public purse, as they said in the 18th century, was a way of giving them genuine freedom. He thought that that was to do things the wrong way. To give people political freedom, but not economic freedom.

For the American Founders, true freedom was founded in having property, and having enough property to fulfill your moral obligations, your moral obligations to God, father, and country. If you didn't have enough money to support your family, if you didn't have enough money to tithe to support your church, if you didn't have enough property to be

taxed for the public defense, then you weren't really a public man, you weren't really part of the Republic, a participant in the freedom of the public. And so for them, for the American founders—very much for George Washington and very much for Alexander Hamilton and John Adams—this was very much a Federalist view, that liberty was grounded in property, and that political independence went with economic independence

And so the great concern of John Adams is that America, having gained its political independence through the War of Independence from 1776 to 1783, the main concern of the Federalists, the main concern of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and John Adams, was that America needed to repay its war debt. If we did not repay our war debt, then although we had achieved political independence, we would not be economically independent from those European powers who had loaned to us for the purposes of the war. We would be indebted to France, we would be indebted to the Dutch, we would be indebted to Russia. And like so many Latin American countries, which also had revolutions of political independence against Spain, against European powers, yet unlike so many Latin American countries, which failed to repay their war debt, the point of the Constitution for Madison, Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and John Adams, was to make the United States government powerful enough to achieve economic independence from Great Britain.

Now, the biggest problem in terms of economic independence that they saw was that the southern colonies relied almost exclusively on a cash crop that they had to export and sell to Great Britain. They had been reliant on tobacco. They grew to be dependent on cotton. As they moved into the Southwest, in the 19th century, they grew to be dependent on sugar. And this is not sustenance

farming, you're not growing your own food. Man cannot live on tobacco alone. Man cannot live by eating cotton. Man cannot live just on eating sugar. And so these were cash crops. These were export crops. They exported them and then they imported food, and they imported manufactures, largely from Great Britain.

And so the southern colonies because of their dependence on a cash crop, a slave labor economy, were very vulnerable to being a point of dependence for America on a foreign economy. And so, in trying to establish a truly independent country and a truly independent union, the Adams family was committed to diversifying American commerce, diversifying American crops.

George Washington led the way on Mount Vernon by trying to get out of tobacco, going into wheat farming, starting fisheries on the Potomac, starting to graze cattle, and trying to diversify his crops so that he himself could get out of his debt, and make enough money to be able to give the slaves, along with their freedom, enough property that they would not be destitute and would not be cast upon the public purse. He was very concerned, even for one of his runaway slaves. It's a very famous story about George Washington that he pursued one of his young slave women who had run away. And you can see that he was concerned that she would be left destitute, which actually is what happened to her in her old age, she was living on the public purse, I believe in Providence, Rhode Island.

So this concern, this is what I would say the Adams family contributes to the spirit of 1776, this realization that personal independence and national independence, that political independence and economic independence, go together. That I am not personally free if my country is completely dependent on third world countries. I am not personally independent if

my country is completely dependent on China. That personal independence goes along with national independence. And that political independence goes along with economic independence. That if I have the vote, if I've been given the vote and I can participate in public life, but I am in massive credit card debt, that I'm not really free, I'm not free to change my job, I'm not free to take a different job that I think is more aligned with my political beliefs and my lifestyle, my desire to support my family. So this is the spirit of '76, as we get it from the Adams, realizing that for America to be free, America needed to free itself from dependence on slave labor and cash crops in the South. That this is an American project that we're all involved in.

The Adams, moving on to John Quincy Adams, the Adams were very aware that the North was complicit in slavery as well because of their merchant shipping, because Boston shipping interests had been involved in the slave trade. They had made money on the slave trade, which became capital that they then used to create insurance firms to insure the slave trade, or to invest in manufacturing with the cotton mills in New England, which competed with the cotton mills in Great Britain. So the Adams were very aware that this was a national project that we had to work on together and over the generations. To free ourselves from Great Britain, to free ourselves from Great Britain's project of subjugating America through a monopoly on tobacco and tying the American economy during its colonial period to a single cash crop of tobacco, the way that they had tied the Indian economy and the Indian subcontinent to the cash crop of cotton. This would be a great concern of Gandhi in the 20th century.

And so the Adams really contributed a vision of the complexity of the prudential judgments that were needed for a nation to do what was right, that we as a nation needed to repay our debts, achieve indepen-

dence, slowly eradicate our addiction to cash crops. We needed to diversify our economy. We needed to build infrastructure. And we needed to find a way to eradicate slavery.

John Quincy Adams, towards the end of his career he's a really extraordinary figure because he was Secretary of State under Madison and Monroe. He was the President of the United States of America just briefly for one term, but then he's the only president who after his presidency returned to the Congress, and during his retirement years in the Congress in the 1840s, sort of in the close of his life, as an elder statesman who had lived through the American founding, who was a kind of pivotal figure between the founding generation and the period of Jacksonian democracy. John Quincy Adams in his old age in the 1830s and in the 1840s was fighting constantly in Congress against the gag rule, the gag rule that made it impossible for petitions against slavery to come before the Congress. And this was his adamant fight in his old age to such an extent that his wife, Louisa Catherine Adams, laments in her diary that John Quincy Adams's fight against slavery is ruining his health. It's ruining his family. It's even ruining his trust in the providence of God because he's so agonized at the evil of slavery and how ingrained it is increasingly becoming in the American political system. And that he's ruining his career. That he's becoming *persona non grata*, that he's becoming a political outcast, because of his adamance and vehemence on the issue of slavery. And, of course, this image of John Quincy Adams, the elder statesman, trying to remind America of the ideals of 1776, remind America that in the Declaration of Independence we had said all men are created equal, that nowhere in the Constitution does the Constitution refer to African Americans as property, that the Constitution refers to African American slaves as persons held in servitude. It recognizes their personhood.

The famous portrait that we have of John Quincy Adams fighting this fight, it's kind of what I would call the Adams family's last stand. John Quincy Adams's last stand is his Supreme Court battle in the Amistad case. And there is a wonderful movie about the Amistad case. It's not a perfect movie, it's not perfectly historical. There are many problems with it as a historical film. And yet, I would very much recommend that people watch Anthony Hopkins as John Quincy Adams, an elder statesman, making his case before the United States Supreme Court in favor of the slaves who had mutinied, who had risen up on the slave ship Amistad and sailed that ship into Boston in hopes of gaining their freedom.

And he argued that case over a ten year period, day in, day out, month in, month out. As he's giving his final speech, and the movie does give a kind of cameo of John Quincy Adams' final speech in the Amistad case. As he's giving his final speech, he's trying to wrap up his case. He is drenched with the sense of the death of the founding generation. His father had died. Thomas Jefferson had died. George Washington had died. Alexander Hamilton had died. The founding generation who had believed in these ideals, who had passed the Northwest Ordinance, who did not want slavery to move into the western territory, had died. And whether the Democratic Party under Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, and Pierce and Buchanan, who fought the Mexican War in order to bring Texas into the union as a slave state, whether they were living up to those founding ideals of 1776 caused John Quincy Adams deep agony in his old age. As he was trying to conclude his case, each of the Supreme Court justices died. And so they would have to pause the case and wait for the nominations process. Wait for the confirmation hearings. There would be another nomination process and another confirmation hearing when the next Supreme Court Justice died, right. And he had to wait as the as the old justices, sometimes justices

that his father John Adams had appointed to the Supreme Court passed away, and new justices were appointed. New justices were appointed by members of the Democratic Party. Justices who would reinterpret the Constitution as meaning that African Americans were property who could be taken out west. That the language of property could be applied to slaves. That is a language that is applied during the period of the Jacksonian Democratic Party. That is not the spirit of 1776. John Quincy Adams returns to the fight. And he uses two phrases in that final speech. And this is where I want to end so that then we can have some time for questions. He uses two phrases in that final speech. The phrases don't make it into the movie, which is why I would really encourage you to print out the last page of John Quincy Adams's famous address closing the Amistad case, what was called his grand peroration, the grand finale of his speech, because it is actually much more beautiful than the one that is given in the movie, *The Amistad*.

It's a famous speech that was the most famous abolitionist address throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Before young Americans could memorize the Gettysburg Address, young children of abolitionists were memorizing the grand finale of John Quincy Adams' address in the Amistad case. And two of the phrases that he uses there, he calls upon the Supreme Court justices, and he says:

Remember that you too, are going to die, and that you too are going to be judged by the Supreme Judge of this world. And you are going to be judged for whether you put into action the words of the American founding, or whether you were unfaithful to the principles of the American founding.

He says:

I hope that when you die, you will hear from the

Supreme Judge of this world those beautiful words from the Gospel, "Come, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master." If you are faithful to the principles of the American founding, if you are faithful to the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence, which says that all men are equal, if you live up to the idea that slaves are persons held to servitude, and that the slave trade should end, and that slavery should not move out West, that this should be an empire for liberty, then you will hear those words of approbation at your death. "Come good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master."

And then he uses another phrase. He uses a phrase in Latin, from the great text of Western Civilization, Virgil's *Aeneid*. He uses an amazing phrase. He uses a phrase that essentially means, "Here I rest my case." Here, I lay down all of my life's efforts before you. "This is my last battle. I have returned to the court from my retirement for one last battle to defend the freedom of these slaves."

And he compares himself to the figure of Entellus in Virgil's *Aeneid*, an old fighter who is challenged by a younger generation, just as the American founders were challenged by the Democratic Party who wanted to extend slavery to the westward. He compares himself to Entellus who comes back for one last battle against an upstart fighter. The name Entellus is actually where JRR Tolkien gets the idea of the Ents, the old gnarly trees who are too tired to fight, but finding themselves and in their old sap enough strength for one last battle coming to the defense of the freedom of Middle Earth against Mordor.

And John Quincy Adams also compares himself to Entellus, to an old warrior, returning for one last battle to defend the spirit of 1776 against the Democratic Party, which wanted to make America an empire for slavery instead of an empire for liberty as

the American founders had intended. And so he closes his speech in the Amistad case saying, "*hic caestrus artemque repono*." "Here my belt and my weapons I lay down." There's something very beautiful, very triumphalistic. My whole life's work has been at the service of the spirit of '76. And I have closed it in an effort to bring the spirit of 1776 and its opposition to slavery into the next generation.

His son, Charles Francis Adams, would be Abraham Lincoln's right hand man in preventing the British with their cotton mills from coming into the Civil War on behalf of the Southern slaveholding planters. And then Henry Adams would become the historian of this great family. And so I just really think that Americans when they're talking about the spirit of '76 need to realize that the Adams family dynasty ought not to be forgotten. That their spirit is a light in dark places when all other lights go out. They very much saw themselves as bearers of that torch.

They were born in log cabins. Their log cabins are still standing today in Quincy, Massachusetts. They were not born in slaveholding, Southern tobacco plantations. They were farmers and shoemakers. They had come off the Mayflower as Puritans. And they insisted that that Puritanism taught them that evil is new in every generation. And freedom is new in every generation. Every generation needs to fight again for moral principle and the battle is never completely over, but that we fight that battle all together as Americans. They believed in the Union.

So make your political pilgrimage to Quincy, Massachusetts, the only place in America where two presidents are buried together in the same resting place beneath the first church in Quincy, Massachusetts. John Adams and Abigail Adams, John Quincy Adams and Louisa Catherine Adams, are buried there, the fighters for the true spirit of 1776.

Thank you, and I would love to take questions.

David Randall

Thank you so much. That was a wonderful speech. There are questions coming up. And I don't know if you can see them, I'm actually just going to start with one of my own for just looking forward beyond 1865. You're talking about the connection between making America great and making America free. And you made me think about the impulse after World War Two, which was connecting American standing in the cold war against Russia with the domestic reform of civil rights. Was there any explicit connection or a harkening back to the Adams heritage in that line of argument which helped make the civil rights revolution happen in the 50s and 60s, as part of "we must make the American Republic greater in the world?"

Susan Hanssen

So this might seem like a little bit of an esoteric answer. But yes, indeed, there is a connection. There is a very interesting little intellectual lineage that one can trace between Henry Adams and Martin Luther King, Jr. So in Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, which is an incredible text which all of the students at the University of Dallas have to read, it is a core text in their American Civilization course. And so I've been teaching Martin Luther King for 20 years, having students read his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, which is an argument in favor of civil disobedience.

He grounds his argument for civil disobedience in the idea of natural law. That laws passed by a legislature, laws passed by a state legislature, laws passed by the federal legislature, any statutory law, has to be measured against the laws of nature and nature's God. They have to be measured against the eternal and moral law. And he says explicitly that he

gets this idea from reading those figures of the great Judeo Christian heritage, which had been enlivened during America's fight against totalitarianism during the American Civil War and the beginnings of the Cold War.

So, the natural law tradition, grounded in the writings of St. Augustine, who Martin Luther King quotes, and in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, who Martin Luther King quotes in the *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, that natural law tradition had been revived in America during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Because it was seen as the best counter to totalitarianism, whether that totalitarianism was National Socialism, German fascism, or whether it was international socialism and Soviet communism. Socialism, the glorification of a state and the belief that states have the right to make any laws that a majority wants, whether that's a racial majority as in Germany or a fictitious worker's majority in the Soviet Union. They claimed to be a democratic republic, but they were not. It was the party majority. So there was this argument in America really put forward by figures like Jacques Maritain and Mortimer Adler, but then also so many other figures that Martin Luther King was reading when he was a seminary student at Boston University. And since Boston University was a Methodist seminary, he was reading this great natural law tradition.

And Henry Adams, so he's sort of the last of the Adams family dynasty. We're not denying that there are still Adams family members alive today—that dynasty continues. But Henry Adams is the historian looking back. Henry Adams in his old age became fascinated with Thomas Aquinas and the natural law tradition. And one of his nieces married into the LaFarge family and one of his nephews becomes a medieval art historian, and a member of the LaFarge family is actually the famous Reverend John LaFarge who helps to write the document *Humani Generis*, which

proclaims the unity of the human race. It is the great argument against scientific race theory that says that there were multiple points of beginning to the human race, and that white people are simply better than black people genetically because of evolution. So the Adams family is actually contributing to a 20th century rejection of race theory and arguing that humans are humans, that we all come from the same stock.

So yeah, there's a strange intellectual lineage from Henry Adams to the revival of natural rights theory to *Humani Generis* and the affirmation of the unity of the human family and Martin Luther King writing his *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. I know that's a little bit of strange intellectual history. But there you have it.

David Randall

Thank you. Well, that was my question. I'm going to speak for the trees. No, I'm going to speak for the audience. Actually, I speak for the Ents. Abigail Adams's role, that's a question. In effect, we're talking about the Adams family role in freedom. Can we bring Abigail Adams into the story?

Susan Hanssen

So Abigail. I'm actually fascinated with all of the Adams women, Abigail Adams and Louisa Catherine Adams. In some sense, I would say that they are keepers of the flame of Christian faith in the Adams family. There's a new book on the Adams family, which is called *Household Gods*, by someone whose last name is Georgini. *Household Gods of the Adams Family*, kind of looking at the spiritual life of the Adams family. And one of the important things that the Adams family brings to the American tradition or represents in the American tradition is this vivid sense of original sin. That everyone is flawed, that things are not as the Beatles would have it "getting so much better

all the time. It's getting better all the time." The Adams family didn't believe things were getting better all the time. They believed, as Christians, that every new generation who comes into the world is sinful, and free, and has to struggle to conquer themselves and to live virtuously. And that we cannot solve all of our problems simply with politics, that there needs to be a revival of religious and moral life in order to overcome the evils of our society. And that is a really important picture of how American life has progressed through the ages.

So we had the Great Awakening, the great evangelical awakening, in the 18th century. The great evangelical awakening associated with figures like George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards. And it's through that great awakening that the abolitionist spirit first arises. And people first embrace the abolitionist spirit as they're also embracing a greater sense of their own moral and civic duties. This is what John Adams refers to as the great revolution in the minds and hearts of the people that predated the political and the military revolution. Then in the 19th century we have the Second Great Awakening. The Second Great Awakening was very much associated with the Beecher preacher family, Lyman Beecher, and his innumerable children. All of his sons also became preachers, all of his daughters also became teachers. Perhaps the most famous is Harriet Beecher Stowe who wrote the great abolitionist novel, her great abolitionist tract against slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

And then in the 20th century that revival of natural law theory is partly coming about because of the influx of Jewish and Catholic immigration from the continent, fleeing the rise of fascism in Italy, the rise of fascism in Germany, the rise of fascism in Russia. So we get Russian Jews, we get Poles, we get Italians, we get Southern Germans. Anyone who doesn't want to live under a totalitarian regime is

flooding into America in an extraordinary migration, which is creating a new religious revival. This time, oddly enough, with a lot of Protestant conversions to Catholicism. So many Protestant conversions to Catholicism that Harvard, the old Puritan stronghold of academia since the Mayflower in 1620, Harvard creates a Chair of Catholic Studies in the 1850s.

So American history, the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement, has actually followed a revitalization of Christianity in the 18th century Great Awakening, the revitalization of Christianity in the 19th century Second Great Awakening, and finally the revitalization of Christianity in terms of natural law thinking in the Judeo Christian tradition in the 1950s. You think of great preachers of the 1950s, like Billy Graham, or Father Sheen on television. These were the great revivals of the 1950s.

So making America great again has always really been rooted in faith. And faith has always been at the root of getting rid of our national sin, our national original sin of slavery, being tied to a cash crop and being tied to slave labor. So Christianity has always been the solution, and so groups like Black Lives Matter, that want to replace the black churches and get rid of black Christianity, the black Baptist tradition, the black Methodist tradition, in terms of leadership of the civil rights movement, are rejecting a very powerful tradition in American history of black Christianity. And also the gospel hymns of liberation, which are such an important part of American culture.

David Randall

That's actually leading me to a question I wanted to ask. So there's a broader idea that the Great Awakening is Puritanism gone wrong, heretical Puritanism. To what extent is Nikole Hannah-Jones a heretical Adams-ite? I mean, to what extent is she picking

up on anything in the Adams tradition? And is she rejecting stuff in it?

Susan Hanssen

Well, I think that the utopianism, the democratic socialist utopianism of current radicals is very far from the spirit of the Adams family. Another book that I might recommend, I'm sorry, I'm recommending an entire library worth of reading here. But I see that one of the questions is that the conventional understanding of history is now being dismissed as a fabrication. And I know that that's true. And so people need to really put some time into re-educating themselves by reading the right books. And so I would very much encourage reading the books of Russell Kirk, both his *Roots of the American Order*, and his *The Conservative Mind*. In his book *The Conservative Mind* he really treats the Adams as the backbone of an interesting form of conservatism. Conservatism which is trying to conserve liberty, trying to conserve the principles of the American founding. But he points out there that the Adams were anti-utopian. They fundamentally did not believe that the state is the engine for perfecting human society. That has been tried in the 20th century, and found terribly wanting. But the Adams, both John Adams observing the political utopianism of the French Revolution, and Henry Adams prophetically predicting the political utopianism of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, predicted that attempts to create a perfect society using the power of the state to create absolute egalitarianism, absolute economic egalitarianism, would lead to a form of totalitarianism and the complete destruction of civil liberties.

You know, this is really what the Adams give us, is a skepticism about political utopianism. It is the Adams spirit that gives us George Orwell's *1984*, a political dystopia about the future. It is the Adams spirit that gives us Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

as a dystopian futuristic novel. The Adams were very skeptical about political utopia. Very skeptical because they said human nature is flawed. You can't build a perfect society with flawed human beings. Every generation will come into the world with a tendency towards evil, a need to struggle to conquer itself, achieve virtue, reach out for the grace of God, and assert its own freedom. But it's not just going to happen once and for all. So this political utopianism, the idea that once we get rid of the Electoral College, once we have public schooling, indoctrination for all with a new K through 12 civics program as mandated by the federal government under Obama, then all will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well because the state will perfect society. But the Adams family, they're too Puritan to believe in such things. And so they're very, very skeptical of such ideas.

David Randall

So I just want to follow up then on that same question you were looking at. How practically, do you argue, as a teacher in the classroom, as a public intellectual in the public square, with people just dismissing this or come in thinking this just isn't true, how do you persuade people of the truth, particularly, when they are dead set against listening?

Susan Hanssen

There's a wonderful phrase in one of my favorite movies, *Princess Bride*, where one of the characters says, "This word, inconceivable. This word, I do not think it means what you think it means." So when you take phrases that people have rattling around in their heads that they've heard before, but they don't know the full meaning of. Phrases, like the under God phrase, phrases like the laws of nature and nature's God, phrases like persons held to servitude in the Constitution. And then you show them where they

came from, where we got these ideas. It helps them to realize that they can't help it. They are Americans. This is their heritage. They have grown up with these ideas. I mean, the idea that you could claim to be a person with dignity and rights, and yet reject Western Civilization, which gave us the word *persona*, that gave us the word *dignitas*? They gave us the notion of rights in the sense of jurisdiction, that this might be right or wrong, but you don't have a right to tell me whether to do it or not.

This is an idea that has long roots in the Western tradition. Without the Greeks, without the Romans, without Cicero, without Thomas Aquinas and the tradition of canon law, we wouldn't have this notion of rights and jurisdictions, the dignity of the person, right to trial by jury, right to *habeas corpus*. *Habeas corpus*, a Latin phrase, which means you have a right to your body, I have a right to have my body. Not to be arrested without being told what crime I'm being arrested for. I need to know what I'm being indicted for. You can't just arrest me and put me in jail and keep me there without telling me what I've been accused of. And you must let me face my accuser. Anonymous complaints on a hotline don't cut it.

These are long American traditions that aren't written into the Constitution. They're not written in any statutory law. They're part of our unwritten law, which we have gotten from Western Civilization. So when a policeman who you think is being brutal, is clapping handcuffs on you, and you say, what did I do wrong? What am I doing wrong? What am I being arrested for? What is my crime? You are appealing to Western civilization against the police.

So you need to show people that the ideas that they have by which they think they're challenging the system are actually coming from Western Civilization, are rooted in a long standing tradition of liberty, the idea of the equality of all human beings.

God bless the American founders for thinking it was self-evident. It was only self-evident to them, because out of a 2,000 year tradition they had learned that if Socrates is a man and all men are mortal, then Socrates is mortal. They had learned that man is made in the image and likeness of God, male and female, created He them. They had lived under the British constitutional and common law system, and had come to claim their rights before the law in the supremacy of law of Magna Carta. When they said it's self-evident that all men are created equal, meaning all human persons, that was self-evident to them as Christians and as Britons. It is not self-evident to a lot of cultures across the globe. If you talk to the Hutus and Tutsis in Africa, they do not think that all men are created equal. If you look at the caste system in India, they do not think that all men are created equal. The dignity of women in most Islamic countries, the dignity of children in ancient Roman law, they were the property of the father who had the right of life or death over them. It took a long time to develop the idea that all men are created equal. So to mock it, just scoff at it, to diminish it, shows an enormous ignorance of how fragile the achievements of Western civilization are. We need to actually put an enormous amount of educational effort into passing this heritage on to the next generation.

David Randall

Thank you. And I have another question. You were talking about, in effect, the economic context of what the Adams were doing. And would this be right to say then? That the search for political freedom, individual freedom, racial freedom is embedded in a conception of economic freedom, which is in itself embedded in a system of natural law? I think the question is sort of related to, is this at a distance from an Adam Smith conception of economic freedom, or how close is it to that? How different is it?

Susan Hanssen

So I like to talk to my students sometimes about the fact that English is a very complex language, because it has both Latin roots and also Germanic roots, we also have some Celtic words, words that come to us from the French. So it's a very complex language, a very strange dialect that we speak. And so we have the possibility of speaking both of freedom and of liberty. Go on to the Oxford English Dictionary and explore the centuries long history of the words freedom and the words liberty, you'll discover that this is why we have a very rich understanding of human freedom as an English-speaking people, as Winston Churchill called us, part of the English-speaking peoples.

What I want to draw attention to particularly is liberty. *Libertas*. Instead of having the sense that you have the freedom to do anything, the freedom to do whatever you want, the freedom to be whatever you want to be, the freedom to transform yourself; if you're a transhumanist, the freedom to identify as a squirrel if you want to identify as a squirrel; this kind of nature-less, amorphous freedom. *Libertas* I think is a much more grounded sense that you are free to pursue happiness, free to pursue the fulfillment of your human nature. And that means freedom to be just. And the highest elements of justice are the great, thou shalt. Thou shall honor God, thou shall honor your country, thou shall honor your mother and your father. The great thou shalt. We know thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not commit adultery and thou shalt not kill. Even Aristotle knew that there were such things that are intrinsically evil by their very names. And there are such things as absolute moral negatives, as Aristotle says in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.

But the focus really of our life should be on trying to use our property, whether that is our talents, our energy, our work, or the physical property that has come to us through using our talents, our energy, and

our work. And it's a very important idea that when you work on a piece of property, when you sow seeds into the land, and you farm it, and you produce more food on it than would have grown in the wild, that you have signed that property with the signature of your work, with the signature of your humanity, and it has become yours. Property simply means proper, it is proper to you.

It is proper to you to have the fruit of your labor. So to use the fruit of your labor, to support your own dependents, to support your own children, to support your own elderly father and mother, to educate your own children, parental rights and education, to take care of the elderly, not to have the state decide to euthanize them against your will. That is your liberty, it is your right to take care of your dependents with your property. To be taxed to such an extent that you can no longer fulfill that vital part of your moral obligation, which enables you to be just, which enables you to be happy, is a destruction of your pursuit of happiness. Because you are happiest when you can fulfill your most important moral duties. I'm happy when I can care for my children, provide for my family. I'm happy when I can accompany my aged parents with dignity and celebrate a wonderful funeral for them. To use that property to tithe to the church, to support the institutions that I think are doing valuable work in this world? Whether they are tax free churches, whether they are 501(c) (3) philanthropic groups supporting the arts, supporting education, supporting charitable work. That I should have the liberty to use my property to support good works that I think are necessary. That I not be taxed to such an extent that I cannot freely support the groups that I think are doing the best work for the common good. And lastly, that I would support the public defense, that I would be taxed to support the public defense.

So really this idea that liberty is for virtue—the most

important virtue is justice. The highest element of justice is religious patriotism and family obligation, God, father, and country, and we need property to pursue happiness. I know there's slippage between Locke's phrase life, liberty and property, and the Declaration of Independence's phrase life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But liberty and the pursuit of happiness do require, because we are bodies and souls—we are not just freestanding souls which can transmigrate into the body of a squirrel or decide to become a cloud, even if it's an iCloud—we are bodily creatures. We need material possessions in order to support God, father and country. We need to give food to the hungry, we need to pay our soldiers and take care of our veterans. We need to give actual food to our children. So property is necessary for liberty, virtue, and the pursuit of happiness.

David Randall

Thank you so much. And I'm going to say it's now 12:17, which was in effect our original stop time, much as I'd love to keep you on longer. I think what I will just mention just for later, there's a question, will there be a recommended book list? If by any chance you wanted to provide a recommended book list, which we could then pass on to the NAS, we would be glad to publish and pass that along. I think that would be the last great thing. I don't want to cut you off suddenly, but I think we would be coming to the end of our bit here. And I would just say to the listeners we will be having yet more episodes in the series of our conference, Slavery or Freedom, and that's starting at 2:00 pm today Eastern.

Susan Hanssen

Any further questions for me? I just want to say that I'm always happy to respond to questions at my professional email, which you can find at the University of Dallas. I teach in the history department. I'm chair

of the history department at the University of Dallas.
And I'm happy to respond to emails later. So thank
you very much.

David Randall

Thank you so much. And yeah, and you can also send
emails to Randall@nas.org and as I say, at 2:00 pm,
Paul Rahe speaking on our founding ideals. Profes-
sor Hanssen, thank you again so very much. It's been
a wonderful speech. Thank you very much.

Susan Hanssen

Thank you.
Thank you very much for having me.

Our Founding Ideals

Paul Rahe

Chance Layton

All right, David, it's all yours.

David Randall

Hello, and welcome to everybody who is listening to our continuing series, the Slavery or Freedom Conference, a digital online conference extending all week, Monday through Friday. Please check out not only this session, but other sessions coming forward. That's the general advertisement.

Right now, I am delighted to introduce Professor Paul A. Rahe of Hillsdale College, who is giving the talk, "The 1619 Project and the American Founding." I just want to say a little bit about Dr. Rahe. He read *Literae Humaniores* at Wadham College, Oxford, on a Rhodes Scholarship. Completed a PhD in ancient history at Yale University under the direction of the very esteemed Donald Kagan in 1977. A distinguished teaching career and extraordinarily distinguished publication career. I say extraordinarily because I've read your books, but I haven't taken your class—that's not meant to be invidious. But the books include *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution*; [*Soft Despotism*.] *Democracy's Drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau and Tocqueville on the Modern Prospect*; and a wonderful series on Sparta most recently, *The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Spartan Regime; Sparta's First Attic War*; and coming soon, *Sparta's Second Attic War: The Grand Strategy of Sparta 446-418 BC*. There are pages more of the wonderful things he's done, but let me hand it over to him. After his speech, he will be answering questions. Please put them in by the chat or the question and answer. Dr. Rahe may be looking at those himself, but if he doesn't, I'll pass on questions for other people. Thank you. Dr. Rahe.

Paul Rahe

Nikole Hannah-Jones' treatment of the American Founding in her introduction to *The 1619 Project* has two distinguishing features. It makes broad claims that cannot be sustained by the enormous body of evidence that we have concerning the origins and character of the American Revolution, and it abstracts almost entirely from the history of the world up to that time.

It is the latter issue that I will begin with because the significance of the American Revolution in general, and its import for the institution of slavery, can only be understood when set in the context of what came before. Prior to the American Revolution, slavery was the norm, not the exception. It appears to have been coeval with civilization. It existed in ancient Sumeria, Akkad, Elam, Assyria, Chaldaean Babylon, Israel, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. It existed from time immemorial in China, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and India. It existed throughout the Muslim world, in Africa, and among the aboriginal populations of North and South America. By the early modern period, it had pretty much died out in Europe thanks to a prohibition against Christians enslaving their co-religionists, but, in and after Columbus' day, it was a presence nearly everywhere in the New World, where Christians from Europe encountered pagans.

In general, peoples did not enslave their own. Slavery presupposed what Orlando Patterson calls "natal alienation" – which is to say, slaves were almost uniformly outsiders. The emergence of universal religions extended the restriction. Christians were not comfortable enslaving fellow Christians. Muslims evidenced a similar reluctance.

Prior to the eighteenth century, almost no one objected to slavery as such. From the terms of the distinction that Aristotle draws between natural slavery and slavery rooted in convention, one could draw the conclusion that no natural slave would be of real use

to a master and that the slavery that did exist was rooted in municipal law and in convention, but unjust. However, I know of no one who followed through on what Aristotle implied; and Aristotle himself, when he describes the best regime, presupposes that slavery will be required. It was widely supposed that, absent some sort of system of subjection, high civilization was impossible.

Taking their cue from the first few chapters of *Genesis*, where man is said to be created in the image and likeness of God, a number of Church Fathers asserted what Aristotle never even intimated: the natural equality of man. And this had a significant impact, but it did not, for a very long time, eventuate in a critique of aristocracy or the institution of slavery as such. For Christians tended to think that what was true in the eyes of God need not be applicable in the city of man. In the late 16th century, however, Jean Bodin did articulate a critique of slavery – but to no effect. It was not until the publication of John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* in 1690 that one can find an articulation of a teaching concerning justice that is inconsistent with the existence of slavery as an institution; and Locke, who had once owned stock in the Royal African Company and who had in the 1660s drafted a constitution for the Carolinas that included a provision for slavery, did not point out the implications for European practice in the New World of his denial that anything other than unjust aggression could legitimate the enslavement of anyone, and his attendant assertion that no one could legitimately be born into slavery. Others, however, soon did so: Gershom Carmichael, for example, in the lectures delivered at the University of Glasgow early in the eighteenth century, and in the notes to the editions of Pufendorf's *De officio hominis et civis* that he published in Edinburgh in 1718 and 1724. And his successor in the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, Francis Hutcheson, did the same in *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, which he pub-

lished in 1747, and in *A System of Moral Philosophy*, which he brought out eight years thereafter. The influence of these two academic Scots was, however, limited.

The first figure of profound pan-European influence to denounce slavery was Montesquieu. In 1732, in his *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, he intimated what he later said openly, describing the ancient Romans as men “accustomed to making sport of human nature in the person of their children and slaves” and suggested that men of this sort “could scarcely be acquainted with the virtue that we call humanity.” Sixteen years later, in *The Spirit of the Laws*, he attacked slavery as an institution “contrary to nature” that causes men to forget that they are all “born equal.” Under its influence, he added, the masters “insensibly become accustomed to lacking all the moral virtues.” It loosens “the reins on their incontinence,” and it renders them “haughty, curt, unfeeling, irascible, voluptuous, and cruel.”

What happened in Jamestown in 1619 one hundred twenty-nine years before the publication of *The Spirit of the Laws* was not an event of profound importance, as this discussion should make obvious. It was business as usual – the sort of thing that was going on that year outside western Europe in nearly every corner of the globe among Asians, Africans, Turks, Arabs, American Indians, and, yes, Europeans all over the New World. Moreover, slavery was a practice then unquestioned.

What happened in the North American colonies between 1762 and 1776 was another matter, however. It initiated a transformation of world-historical importance, rooted in the distinctive heritage of the West (by which I mean philosophy and Christianity), that eventuated in the abolition of slavery everywhere. To suggest that “one of the primary reasons

the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was that they wanted to protect the institution of slavery,” to claim that the Americans would “never have revolted against Britain” if the Founders “had not believed that independence was required in order to ensure that slavery would continue,” to assert that “neither Jefferson nor most of the founders intended to abolish slavery,” as Nikole Hannah-Jones does, is to display either gross ignorance, or malice and dishonesty. It mattered profoundly in 1776, as it still matters now, that Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin, with full support from the Continental Congress, chose to ground the American colonies’ justification for independence not on the traditional rights of Englishmen, but on the laws of nature and nature’s God as they apply to all human beings, announcing: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that 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.” We should all – black and white – repeat with some frequency what Abraham Lincoln wrote eighty-three years later, “All honor to Jefferson – to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there, that to-day, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression.” Jefferson himself, in turning down an invitation to speak in Washington, DC on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, wrote regarding that document and that event, “May it be to the world what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all) the Signal of arousing men to burst the chains, under which Monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves,

and to assume the blessings & security of self government.” As for slavery itself, when he revised the laws of Virginia in 1779, Jefferson prepared an amendment providing for the emancipation of all slaves born after the passing of the act, directing “that they should continue with their parents to a certain age, then be brought up, at the public expence, to tillage, arts or sciences, according to their geniusses till the females should be eighteen, and the males twenty-one years of age, when they should be colonized to such place as the circumstances of the time should render most proper, sending them out with arms, implements of household and of the handicraft arts, seeds, pairs of the useful domestic animals, &c. to declare them a free and independent people, and extend to them our alliance and protection, till they shall have acquired strength.” Later, as a member of the Confederation Congress, Jefferson pressed for barring slavery from all the western territories, and the proposal he drafted, which become the model for the unanimously-adopted Northwest Ordinance of 1787, would have passed when it came up for a vote in 1784 had it not been for the absence, due to illness, of a single delegate from New Jersey. Moreover, in 1783, Jefferson drafted a revised constitution for Virginia, barring the importation of slaves and specifying that all children born of slaves after 31 December 1800 be declared free, and he later published that draft as an appendix to his *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

In that tract, which appeared in Paris in French in 1785 and in the United States in English in 1787, he wrote, “Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution

in the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.” If slavery was eventually brought to an end in North America seventy-eight years later, and if it was subsequently outlawed world-wide, it was because of the argument articulated during the course of the American Revolution and embraced by the Founding generation. One can, of course, charge Jefferson and his generation with failing to follow through fully on the conviction to which they had come in the years stretching from 1762 to 1776. In New England and Pennsylvania, slavery was outlawed with some alacrity. In New Jersey and New York, this eventually took place. But, in Delaware, Maryland, and states further south, the movement towards emancipation stalled, and slavery actually expanded as southerners and others migrated to the southwest. But this is not entirely surprising, and, though regrettable, it is not shocking. Where it was relatively easy to eliminate slavery, where it was not economically fundamental, it was eliminated. Where the consequences would have been economically devastating, where families would have lost their wherewithal, the revolutionary generation fell short. They were, after all, human – all too human – and, in places like Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, their material interests were profoundly at odds with their sentiments.

In his attitude toward slavery, Patrick Henry may have been a typical Virginian. In a personal letter written in 1773 and not intended for publication, he acknowledged that it left him dumbfounded that an age which could “boast of high Improvements in the Arts and Sciences & refined Morality” should also “have brought into general Use, & guarded by many Laws, a Species of Violence & Tyranny, which our more rude barbarous, but more honest Ancestors detested.” He found it “amazing, that at a time when

the rights of Humanity are defined & understood with precision in a Country above all others fond of Liberty: that in such an Age and such a Country, we find Men . . . adopting a Principle as repugnant to humanity, as it is inconsistent with the Bible & destructive to Liberty.” Of course, he remarked, “every thinking honest Man rejects it in Speculation.” But, he asked, “how few in Practice from conscientious Motives?” In juxtaposing theory and practice, Henry knew only too well whereof he spoke. “Would anyone believe,” he exclaimed in dismay, “that I am Master of Slaves of my own purchase! I am drawn along by ye general Inconvenience of living without them; I will not, I cannot justify it.” He could only affirm his belief that “a time will come when an opportunity will be offered to abolish this lamentable Evil.” In the interim, it was his duty and that of his compatriots to “transmit to our descendants together with our Slaves a pity for their unhappy Lot, and an abhorrence for Slavery.” In the short run, he thought, one could not reasonably hope for a greater consummation.

Jefferson and others hoped that, with tobacco cultivation exhausting the soil, his fellow Virginians would find it necessary to turn to wheat and other crops less well-suited to slave labor. And he hoped that anti-slavery sentiment would deepen at the same time. In one passage in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he wrote, “The minds of our citizens may be ripening for a complete emancipation of human nature.” In another, he added, “I think a change already perceptible since the origin of the present revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.” In judging the founding generation and finding them wanting, as we should, we would be well advised to

consider how many of our contemporaries – white or black – who have families would make a sacrifice comparable to the one that, these men knew, justice demanded. Reflection along these lines might go a long way towards reducing indignation and introducing a modicum of moderation into our counsels.

The cost of emancipation was one problem. There were others. In the 1790s, manumission in states like Maryland and Virginia was common. The results were not, however, entirely satisfactory. Frequently, there was nothing in the experience of these freedmen as slaves that prepared them for life as free men, and they often ended up as vagrants and as a charge upon the public. As the Marylanders and Virginians learned, emancipation was not going to be an easy task.

There was another problem. Jefferson addressed it in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. “It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state, and thus save the expense of supplying, by importation of white settlers the vacancies they will leave? Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but with the extermination of the one or the other race.” Jefferson’s fears were widely shared, and they were greatly reinforced by what his fellow slaveholders learned about the revolution that took place in Haiti in the years stretching from 1791-1804. This was a rebellion led by freedmen that eventuated in the massacre of much of the island’s white population. It led Jefferson and others to do a turnabout and come out in favor of diffusing the slave population throughout the entirety of the United States. It was with Haiti in mind that Jefferson responded in 1820 to the Missouri controversy by writing, “We

have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.” That this sentiment was convenient, all too convenient, does not mean that it was not sincerely held. Nor should these fears be dismissed as absurd. What had happened in Haiti certainly could have happened elsewhere. Nor should we dismiss Jefferson’s observation as immoral. The political morality grounded in social contract theory was rooted in the primacy of security. Allegiance was a function of the security afforded life, liberty, and property. Moreover, *in extremis*, the right to defend one’s life, liberty, and property trumped all obligations – and that right belonged to the masters as well as to those they enslaved. Let me add the obvious. Jefferson was right about white prejudice. He was, though he did not realize it, an avatar of that prejudice itself – as I could demonstrate if time allowed. White prejudice may have for the most part abated today, but it was alive and well as late as the mid-1960s when I was in high school. And black resentment and distrust is hardly gone. Without it, the 1619 Project would have been inconceivable. *De facto* segregation at least partially governs our lives, and where we do mix it is often awkward. Jefferson and the founders and members of the American Colonization Society – men like James Madison, John Marshall, and Henry Clay – had an argument. So did Marcus Garvey. Whether that argument was in the end compelling is, of course, another matter.

Nothing that I have said thus far, however, excuses the Founding generation for its failure to properly address the two-fold challenge posed by slavery. After all, it was unjust, and its continuing existence posed a threat to the survival of the republic. What the Founding generation did in response to these challenges was to take the easy way out. They punted to the generations following, and the consequences were disastrous: a grave injustice that was perpetuated and deepened as new generations were born into

slavery, and a Civil War that took the lives of 650,000 to 850,000 Americans. This was a failure of statesmanship. What the Founding generation could and should have done was to bar forever the importation of slaves and put into place a program of gradual emancipation and, perhaps, colonization funded by the sale of western lands – with generous provisions made for the freedmen sent out as colonists and compensation paid to the slaveowners so that slavery could be eliminated within a generation without bankrupting those who had inherited that institution. Instead, the Confederation Congress allowed the expansion of slavery into what was then the southwest. And, at the Federal Convention, the Framers negotiated a compromise with South Carolina – the one state where antislavery sentiment was minimal – allowing for twenty years the importation of new slaves from abroad. Those two acts, supplemented by the consequences of the invention of the cotton gin, produced the slavepower.

There were reasons why these compromises were made – the Union was fragile, and the South Carolinians in particular were adamant – but the extension of slavery into the southwest and the corrupt bargain between New England and the Deep South that kept the slave trade open were unnecessary. The injustice done the human beings imported and those sent west and the damage done to the existing citizen population – both in the North and in the South – was immense. There were reasons, which I have spelled out above, why the Founding generation punted. But they, too, were insufficient. They had diagnosed a cancer. Then, instead of excising it, they allowed it to grow. They perpetuated and expanded the scope of an institution they knew to be and proclaimed unjust, and they inflicted on those who came after a nightmare that remains – at least in some small measure – alive to this day.

The institution's perpetuation and expansion had another terrible consequence that Jefferson should have foreseen. The spirit of the master did not abate. It increased. When sentiments and interests are profoundly at odds, one or the other is bound over time to give way. Either the interest – in this case the interest of the slaveholder – must be eliminated, or sentiments will gradually come into accord with these interests. Institutions and deeply embedded practices educate. Tradition has authority. It elicits approval. One cannot pass to one's progeny both slaves *and* an abhorrence of slavery.

Jefferson understood this. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he wrote:

There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances.

As everyone who has had children knows, the example we set is more influential than the words we preach. By acquiescing in the perpetuation and

extension of an institution they knew to be evil, Jefferson's generation of American statesmen taught their children and grandchildren not to take seriously the antislavery sentiments they voiced. It is not surprising that in and after the 1820s we find an ever increasing number of slaveholders arguing that slavery is a positive good. Jefferson Davis and Alexander Hamilton Stephens turned their backs on the sentiments voiced by the men after whom they were named, in large part because the generation to which those men belonged failed to bring the interests of well-to-do-southerners into accord with those sentiments.

As Americans, we live with a paradox. Our founding was arguably the most glorious moment in human history. It ought to be a source of pride. Moreover, when it came to the shaping of institutions, the statesmanship of the Founders is for the most part admirable. But they did fall short in one crucial regard, and for that we are still paying – both black and white – a considerable price. Thank you.

David Randall

Thank you very much, Dr. Rahe. Wonderful speech. I'm going to remind people who are watching to please send in your questions to the question and answer box at the bottom—in the chat box at the bottom. If you can't figure that out, email me, randall@nas.org. I'll start with the first question, why did you start with 1762? Why that date in particular?

Paul Rahe

Well, the history of the revolution is a history of change in sentiments. In 1762, the Americans were proud to be Englishmen. And between 1762 and 1776 they ceased to be Englishmen. In 1762, at the end of the French and Indian War, they thought of their rights as the rights of Englishmen. By 1776

they could no longer remain Englishmen, and could make no claims to the rights of Englishmen. And so gradually, in between those two times, they moved in the direction of John Locke and the notion of natural rights. And it is in that period, as a consequence of that motion, that they began to think critically about the way they themselves lived.

There was slavery in every American colony.

By the time the Constitutional Convention met, the institution had been abolished in New England and in Pennsylvania.* So you can see the motion that was taking place. And that motion had to do with thinking through things that they had never had occasion to think through before. And so I begin in 1762 because that's the year the Americans got word that the Stamp Act was coming. And it's the Stamp Act that got the ball rolling and induced the colonists to begin that process of rethinking. And let me say the first pamphlet written against the Stamp Act equated the rights of Englishmen with the natural rights as articulated by John Locke in *Two Treatises of Government*. Locke came to be spoken of more and more as the colonists approached 1776. But he was there in the background from the outset, the colonists had read him, but they had not given his argument much thought. And they had not thought about the implications of Locke for them.

David Randall

A related question, how much should we be thinking of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as making the same sorts of arguments? How much are they in tension, in particular with relationship to the 1619 project and the issues of race?

Paul Rahe

The Declaration of Independence is a statement of principles. The Constitution is a practical document,

meant to put those principles into practice *insofar as that could be done*. So the difference between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution is the tension that always exists between theory and practice. There are always going to be compromises of one sort or another with abstract principles. And in the American case, the facts on the ground, which is to say the existence of slavery, is a key issue. One of the things that people like John Adams in the North say, is, you cannot simply, suddenly free the slaves. They'll starve. And that's right. And the manumissions that took place in Maryland and Virginia were by and large not so very successful.

David Randall

I'm going to follow up now with a question from the audience. How should we counter the erroneous claims of the 1619 Project? And what are some good tactics to correct those with whom we disagree?

Paul Rahe

Well, I think you need to start where I did. I picked Jefferson. And I picked him because he is a target mentioned explicitly in the introduction to the 1619 Project. But what you see if you bother to examine the evidence is what he's trying to do. And he has a plan for the elimination of slavery that he tries in the late 1770s and in the 1780s to put into effect. So he does more than merely articulate the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence (which were adopted with full support from everybody else). He also wrestles with the practical question: "How are we going to live up to those principles?" And he knows, he has profound knowledge of the obstacles: to wit, that, in places like Virginia and, even more so, South Carolina, the interests of the people who made the Revolution and the institution of slavery are intimately entangled. He's also aware that you can't simply free the slaves. So the thing has to be done in

a systematic way in which there is some provision for training those who are to be freed to operate as free men and so forth. So I would point to that.

But the second thing I would say to someone who finds himself caught up in this argument is to suggest that he pose this question to those on the other side: “Tell me a time in human history when people have sacrificed not just their personal interests, but the interests of their families and have chosen bankruptcy, not just for themselves, but for their families – all for the purpose of achieving justice.” In other words, the challenge faced by that generation was formidable. Now, as my talk suggests, I think they should have faced that challenge squarely. And I think people like Jefferson and Madison in particular should have done so because the initiative was going to have to come from the South—the North would be amenable, the North was amenable, in fact—but the proposals had to come from the South. The attitude of the Virginians should have been this: “We have to do something about this. We have to do it in this generation, or the cancer will grow.” And what they did, instead, is this: they punted. So I fault Patrick Henry, Jefferson, Madison—really the Virginians and the South Carolinians in general—for not recognizing that if they perpetuated slavery in the hope that something would come along and save them, they would be far, far likelier to make the situation much worse.

David Randall

We have a comment, which is pushing back against the punting. Ray Sanchez, “I don’t think our founding fathers could have made another decision or implemented a way to eliminate slavery in a generation. There wouldn’t have been a union to begin with. They did punt, yes. But it was a purposeful punt, knowing there was only one result that could come from that fourth down play.” And then a comparison.

“Should the United States have negotiated with Stalin’s regime following World War Two? We knew who he was and what his totalitarian communism would try to do to Europe, and yet we negotiated. There was no other option but to negotiate away Eastern Europe following the weariness of a World War. The founders negotiated a union with the evil of slavery still attached. But the outcome was never in doubt. It just took 75-ish years.” Pushback strong and vigorous from your audience.

Paul Rahe

Yes, well, he could have quoted Paul Rahe against Paul Rahe, because that’s something like the position I took in the chapter I wrote on this in *Republics Ancient and Modern*. I have since altered my opinion on the question. And, you know, the real question is obviously a question of prudence. One has to ask oneself, “How could they have coped?” And there are various evils that a fair-minded critic must in our situation contemplate. Moreover, there is no question that the Revolutionary generation was operating within a Lockean context, which stipulated that one’s own self-preservation had to come first. Other concerns were secondary. This is important. The anti-slavery argument derives from an understanding of natural rights that insists on the primacy of self-preservation.

But, one of the things that the questioner said is wrong. It was not inevitable that slavery be eliminated. It was not inevitable that in the North there would be forces that would stand up and resist. It is perfectly conceivable that slavery might have been extended to the entire country by a decision of the United States Supreme Court, and such a decision was in fact on its way. Someone had taken slaves to New York, and this individual had gone to federal court arguing that he had a right under the Constitution to bring his property wherever he wanted to go.

And Chief Justice Taney was preparing a decision following up on the logic of Dred Scott. Now, let me digress for a moment. Roger Taney began his political career as a principled opponent of slavery. He was a Marylander. He freed all of his slaves. It did not work out well for those slaves. He was a defender, in court, of abolitionists all the way up to 1818. So he's an example of a change of opinion in the South, and of a pretty radical change. But no, I don't think it was inevitable that an Abraham Lincoln would appear, that he would articulate the arguments that he articulated in the Lincoln-Douglas debate. I think had he not appeared, Douglas would have become president of the United States, and the South would, in fact, have won what it was seeking. And the North would have gone along with it. I don't think there was anything inevitable about it at all. That's why I changed my mind.

You know, I look at the thing, and I think, "This is a cancer that grows and grows and grows." Now, on the other side is the question whether you could have had a union. And there I think the answer is twofold. I do not believe that you had to have a 20 year importation of slaves. I think the Framers of the Constitution could have called South Carolina's bluff. Now, someone might say, what about Georgia? And I would reply, "Yeah, what about Georgia?" When Georgia ratified the Constitution, Savannah was being besieged by Indians. Georgia was on the border with Spanish territories, and Georgia desperately needed the support of a federal government. Georgia would not have followed South Carolina. And I don't think South Carolina would have had a choice. It was the only state with a majority black population, a majority slave population. It was the one most in danger of a slave rebellion. And if the other states had said no, South Carolinians would have had to knuckle under. So I don't think that was a condition. And by the way, James Madison is with me on that. The opposition to reopening the slave

trade or allowing it to be open for 20 years, came mainly from the Mid-Atlantic states, from Pennsylvania, from Maryland, from Virginia. In fact, the most eloquent attack on the proposal that the importation of slaves be allowed came from Luther Martin of Maryland. And he said everything that could be said on that subject. The Virginians were with him on this question.

Now, the larger question that I think your questioner didn't really address is the point I am making about what needed to be done by the Virginians themselves. In other words, I perfectly well agree that, if the North set as a condition for being part of the Union that the South abolish slavery, the Southerners would have gotten their backs up. They were, after all, a proud lot, and there's plenty of evidence to that effect. So, the failure of statesmanship that I am describing was a failure of Virginians in Virginia. And had their leaders rallied the Virginians behind a program of gradual emancipation, the North would have backed it and the western lands would have been used to compensate those who freed their slaves. But, in the crucial period, Jefferson fell silent on slavery. He said next to nothing on the question. Moreover, when Robert Coles, who served as his secretary during part of his presidency, decided that he would sell his land in Virginia, take his slaves to the Illinois territory and free them, buy land for them, and settle them on it, Jefferson objected, charging him with abandoning "his country." I don't think that these Virginians were helpless in the face of necessity. In fighting Hitler, we did, indeed, have to swallow a lot. In that regard, Winston Churchill said to an aide, "If the devil would join an alliance with us against Hitler, I would have a few words of praise for him in the House of Commons." I mean, yes, prudence is absolutely required, and yes, absolute justice is unachievable. And, yes, self-preservation takes priority. Nonetheless, I do not believe that the Revolutionary generation in the South had to punt.

David Randall

Thank you. By me, that's a wonderful answer. But I trust that if Mr. Sanchez wants more, please write some more on the screen. I'm going to shift back to a different question. There's actually a few pushbacks on our various founding fathers. Here's something on context. Wasn't Jefferson arguing more against divine right of kings when he said all men are created equal, than he was arguing that all men were or should be equal, particularly given his views expressed on blacks and Indians in the *Notes on the State of Virginia*?

Paul Rahe

No. If you look at his first draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson attacks the king for allowing the slave trade. And he blames—this is a little disingenuous—slavery in America on the king, as if the people in America weren't perfectly happy to buy slaves. And that material was taken out of the document. He was forced to rewrite. And he was forced by the likes of John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, who were not at that time slave owners. So no, no, no, no. Was he hostile to priestcraft? Yes, of course. Did he harp on it? Of course, that's easy. But he harped on other things. You know, think about the passage in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* where he writes that, in a race war, God would not take our side. That's pretty strong language.

Now, did Jefferson embody a prejudice? Yes. I'm of the view that the word racism is like the word Marxism. It was coined to describe a doctrine. And that the proper phrase for talking about what is often termed racism is racial prejudice or color prejudice. Jefferson, however, was a genuine racist. That is to say, he articulated—or he toyed with, at least—an argument about lack of intelligence on the part

of blacks. That, by the way, sets him at odds with Alexander Hamilton, who was of the opposite view, perhaps because he had lived among African slaves in the Caribbean and had worked closely with them in a situation where he was not a master, for he was then another low-level person. So Jefferson is articulating a kind of hypothetical argument about black inferiority, and thereby he lays a foundation for the later argument of those who contended that slavery is a positive good, that the blacks have to have other people to rule them. Jefferson doesn't go that far. But you can see that he marks out a path that would lead one in that direction. I alluded to this in my talk. I think the Virginians really fell short.

David Randall

I may want to return to that one, because there's a bunch of questions I think have to do with that. But on a slightly different topic, from Matthew Post, "Dr. Rahe has mentioned the influence of John Locke on Jefferson, among others. I was wondering if Dr. Rahe could expand on his remarks. How prevalent was Locke's influence on the founders, generally? E.g., on attitudes toward liberty and slavery? What parts of Locke's teaching were taken more fully? What parts less so?" You're only allowed five or six books to answer this with.

Paul Rahe

The answer is that, in the period from 1762 to 1776, no author is mentioned, cited, and quoted in North America as often as John Locke. The issues of independence and the right to revolution turn on the arguments made by John Locke. And in particular, the issue is the right of a man to the fruits of his own labor. And therefore taxes have to be a free contribution. Now, when you join a community you accept majority rule. But you don't accept that a parliament in England that doesn't represent you in any

way can make those decisions. It can only be done through your colonial legislatures. So the heart of the Lockean argument is Locke's discussion of labor. It is to be found in the fifth chapter of the *Second Treatise of Government*, and his argument about revolution and the implications for slavery grow out of that.

Well, many of the people who were making that argument in North America were taking the fruits of other people's labor. And they could see it. It was obvious. Once you begin to justify yourself with one set of principles, you realize that this set of principles is the standard by which your own conduct must be judged. So that's how it happened. And the interesting thing is they forged on with those principles and articulated an argument that was, as Lincoln puts it, a stumbling block. And it was a stumbling block for the perpetuation of slavery. Now, I don't believe that the mere articulation of that argument was sufficient to guarantee outlawing slavery. But absent the articulation of that argument, there would not have been any chance.

David Randall

All right, thank you. To the people commenting, and everybody else, if you have follow-up questions, please do post them since we'd love to have your back and forth. I will go back to a different question. Jennifer Bryan, "If George Washington had freed his own slaves during his lifetime, rather than in his will, would that not have prompted more slave owners to follow their sentiments rather than their interests?" I want to say, this speaks directly to your bit about the failure of the Virginians. What more could they have done? This being perhaps the ultimate example of what might have shifted sentiments.

Paul Rahe

Yes, perhaps, but, on the other hand, had he done so he would have bankrupted himself and left his wife in a very difficult position. And that's the obstacle.

What he didn't do was champion emancipation that would be paid for out of the common American funds. And that proposal was in the air, it was talked about. But the Virginians didn't get together and make that the most important thing that they had to deal with. Instead, they took up their quarrel with the Federalists.

David Randall

I have a follow up question. Would Northerners have been willing to pay taxes for that sort of gradual emancipation?

Paul Rahe

It's a good question. The taxes would have to have come in the form of an excise on whiskey and things like that, or in the form of tariffs. And I believe the Northerners would have accepted an argument for some taxes and some tariffs. They understood that the problem was a national problem. In other words, the survival of the Union to some degree turned on this problem. And they knew this from the very beginning. People like Hamilton certainly knew it. That is, in fact, what worried him the most. And the National Bank and the national debt and, really, his entire program, was aimed at binding the wealthy people in the South and the wealthy people in the North to the interests of the Union, so that they all owned a chunk of that debt and could not afford to depart from the Union. And he was deeply upset when Southern planters did not buy national debt.

David Randall

Thank you. This is a reply to you, because some of the previous points you were making about whether there was the option to ratify the Constitution differently. "Georgia may have had little choice but to ratify, but North Carolina was slow to join the

Union and Virginia was a close call, to say nothing of New York. Holdouts of whatever number would have presented an invitation to outside powers to intervene, and a partial union may have quickly crumbled under the pressure.” The commenter then says, “Even though I’m inclined to agree that the framers should have taken some chance, nevertheless.” This is a question of the prudence of pushing for more vigorous anti-slavery action at the time of the ratification.

Paul Rahe

Well, keep in mind that the provision keeping the slave trade open was an obstacle to ratification in the North. Look, you might be able to justify perpetuating slavery with Jefferson’s wolf-by-the-ears argument. But making new slaves? Importing people, in effect funding the enslavement of people in Africa who were not already slaves—that was really hard for people to stomach.

And so if you’re looking at the Anti-Federalist arguments in the North, among those Anti-Federalist arguments were exactly the antislavery arguments I just mentioned. Even by the way, in Maryland. So, for example, Luther Martin became an Anti-Federalist. He had a variety of reasons for doing so, but he was the most eloquent critic of slavery on the floor of the Constitutional Convention. And by the way, when he publishes his Anti-Federalist writings after the convention, slavery looms really large. And I presume, I don’t know, that he was a slave holder, but I presume he was.* So the other thing is, I wouldn’t worry about North Carolina. It didn’t amount to much. Population-wise, wealth-wise. Virginia had real weight. Massachusetts had real weight. South Carolina was going to have weight. Pennsylvania had weight. If Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia voted to ratify, they would carry the rest of the country north of North Carolina with them. And for economic reasons, if no other, the North Carolin-

ians would have followed suit in time, which is what they did. And, of course, Rhode Island was the last. It was the most corrupt state in the Union then, and, except for Louisiana, it is so now.

David Randall

Oh, dear. Poor Rhode Island. Question. Part of what your presentation says is how the theories of liberalism and republicanism create the context for anti-slavery sentiment, abolitionism. One thing that’s interesting is the dynamic by which the questions of race and slavery then move centrally into that tradition by 1860, with Lincoln right there at the center. To what extent are slavery and race beginning to change the traditions of liberalism, republicanism, by the end of the founding generation?

Paul Rahe

Hmm. Can you give me a year? Is it 1836 when James Madison dies? Or do you mean earlier? 1826 when Jefferson dies?

David Randall

I was going to start through 1800, just to constrain the question, but if you wanted to push it forward?

Paul Rahe

Well, okay, let’s go to 1800. The key change is the turnabout that Jefferson and other Virginians make. And that has to do with diffusion of slaves. They look at their situation in light of Haiti. And they are afraid. And their excuse for perpetuating slavery is that it’s not safe to free the slaves. And Jefferson then argues that if you were to diffuse the slaves over the entire territory of the United States, the relative numbers of slaves in any locale would be low enough that his compatriots could cope. So, in a certain

sense, Jefferson (with Madison in tow) anticipated the Dred Scott decision. Not the principles on which Dred Scott was based, but the diffusion of slavery throughout the Union. And these were the people who originally wanted to exclude slavery from all of the western territories.

David Randall

I have two new questions that I want to combine, which I think are connected. “How do I answer the claim made so frequently by the 1619 journalists that the Constitution was pro-slavery?” And then related, “The most damaging aspect of the 1619 Project seems to be its assertion that racism is in America’s DNA, suggesting that it is not amenable to social change and progress. This minimizes the history of the United States since the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s. How can we reaffirm the progress that has been made and renew a positive view of America?” The pro-slavery Constitution question and progress since civil rights, are these linked?

Paul Rahe

Well, look, Jefferson thought that racial prejudice was apt to be a permanent feature. He had a case, and those who argue that racial prejudice is in the American DNA, they have an argument to make. What would you say against it? Well, everything that’s happened since 1964, in the last 50 years, 56 years, would suggest the opposite. That racial prejudice can abate. And it seems to have.

I grew up in Oklahoma. My older sister at one point was a lifeguard and got rather brown. She was made to sit in the back of the bus once. It was real. There’s nothing like that now. Where we fall short is in mixing. And that has to do with mutual discomfort, not with a pervasive prejudice on the part of white people. Now, I’m not saying there aren’t prejudiced

white people, they certainly do exist. But it is nothing like what it was. I grew up in the middle of it. And I remember it very well. And at that time, there was less black discomfort with white people than there is now. I had a good friend at Oxford who became a human rights lawyer in Kenya, and he was at a certain point driven out of Kenya, came to the United States, and I got wind of it. And I brought him in to the University of Tulsa to give a talk. And the President of the University of Tulsa invited all the leaders of the black community in Tulsa to a dinner. And he and his wife were there, and I was there with my wife, and we were the only white people in the room. And I can remember a very frank conversation I had with a black state representative, who said he used to be for integration, and he wasn’t anymore. And that’s, I wouldn’t call that a universal sentiment, and I don’t know that it’s a majority sentiment. But it’s a more common sentiment now than it was, say, in 1967, among African Americans, when I started college.

Things have, in some ways gone very well and in other ways, not so very well. But let me come back to the Constitution. I teach the Constitutional Convention every few years to graduate students and undergraduates and we read everything, the records of the Federal convention. Madison and others were very eager that there be nothing in the Constitution that would appear to sanction slavery. And therefore, they kept the word out. Not because they were hypocrites, but because they didn’t want the fundamental law of the land to confer its authority on the continued existence of slavery. So for the provision about returning runaway slaves they used language that’s really quite awkward as English to describe the runaways and even in the one truly toxic provision within the Constitution, the one guaranteeing that the slave trade could be open for 20 years if states wanted to import slaves, even there, there is this kind of circumlocution. Nikole Hannah-Jones accuses the founders of hypocrisy. But that’s not what’s going on.

What's going on is just the opposite.

To understand what's so wrong with the 1619 Project one has to understand the background—the fact that the whole world accepted slavery. We were at the time the only people in the world who as a people said that slavery is wrong. And so when they framed their Constitution, our forebears went to some lengths to avoid sanctioning within the document what existed at the state level. In the federal document, they refrained from acknowledging that slavery could be lawful. And the Southerners, especially the Virginians, most strongly insisted that there be no mention of slavery. And at one point, with regard to the provision allowing the slave trade to continue for twenty years, Madison in despair, said it might be better to have no mention of the slave trade in the Constitution at all—which would have meant that the federal government would never be empowered to end it. Madison was bothered by even the circumlocution. And keep in mind the crime involved. It's one thing to hold slaves if it's unsafe to let them go. That certainly doesn't justify acquiring more slaves (and increasing the danger). That does not justify funding the enslavement of free men.

David Randall

Thank you. Your new book ought to be called *Those Dang Virginians*.

Paul Rahe

I have things in the old book that point that way. My hero was Alexander Hamilton long before the musical. Hamilton and John Laurens, the son of Henry Laurens, the largest slave holder in South Carolina, with support from Henry Laurens, secured a unanimous vote in the Continental Congress freeing African-American slaves in the deep South and organizing them into units to fight the British.

Now, this was conditional on the South Carolina legislature going along with it, and on that rock the project foundered, but that was what they tried. And what Hamilton and Laurens wanted to show was that these people of African descent could fight for their liberty just as whites could, and that they could equal the whites in capacity. Hamilton and Laurens wanted to demonstrate their merit, and Hamilton was persuaded of their merit because he had had a lot of experience with people of African descent in the Caribbean when he was young. He was a man who would bite the bullet. But, at the time, he didn't have a family. I don't think so anyway. He might have married by that time. But you know, it's easier for single people to make sacrifices than for people who have children.

David Randall

It seems as if the Virginians are in some sense the quintessential Americans. They know the right, but are not whole-hearted always in pursuing it. You know what their ambivalences are. You seem to have more sympathy with Hamilton. But are the Virginians perhaps the quintessential Americans in having to make the choice and making some choices well, and others imperfectly?

Paul Rahe

Perhaps. What I will say is this: the burden that I am pushing onto them is a terrible burden. I mean, it would have required an economic revolution in the South. Doing without stoop labor. And I don't think you can hire people to do stoop labor on a very large scale. And that means abandoning tobacco for the most part. And, you know, I mentioned this in the paper, the Virginians were wearing out the land with tobacco. One of Jefferson's expectations was that Virginia would shift from tobacco to wheat. And wheat does not take that kind of labor, which

means those slaves would have been pretty much useless—not, of course, entirely useless—but you wouldn't need very many slaves. In fact, you wouldn't really need any at all. And you could hire people to do the kind of labor that's involved in growing grain. And so he hoped that this transformation would take place naturally and easily, and in fact that his fellow Virginians would have a motive for freeing slaves. It didn't quite work out that way. They had a motive for selling them west, which is what happened.

David Randall

On that somewhat ambivalent note, we have gotten to 3:15. Anybody who has comments that weren't answered, please send your questions to contact@nas.org or to me at randall@nas.org. I will then forward them to Dr. Rahe, for his copious free time, so that he can answer any unanswered questions directly. But Professor Rahe, did you want to have any last words before we ended this wonderful session?

Paul Rahe

If you want an argument that I'm wrong, you can read what I wrote in the third volume of *Republics Ancient and Modern* in the second chapter, which takes the position the Revolution generation didn't have the freedom I now attribute to them.

David Randall

The willingness to change your mind, this is wonderful, and this is what academics should be doing. It's wonderful to see that happening.

Paul Rahe

Only if you change it for the better. This will always be an open question. Am I more nearly right now than I was then? I can't be sure.

David Randall

Well, we will have another conference again in twenty years, and see if you've changed your mind again.

Paul Rahe

Yes, I'll be 91, and I'll still have my hair.

David Randall

[Laughs] Yeah. Thank you. Thanks.

Paul Rahe

Take care. Thank you.

Did Slavery Make America Rich?

Peter A. Coclanis

David Randall

Hello. I believe there are people who can now hear me and hear the beginning of our fine Wednesday morning speech, and our webinar is now streaming live. Welcome to the slavery or freedom conference by the National Association of Scholars. I'm David Randall, Director of Research at the National Association of Scholars. And it is my pleasure to introduce for this morning's plenary address Peter A. Coclanis, Albert Ray Newsome Distinguished Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who will be speaking on "Did Slavery Make America Rich?" Now I just want to give a bit of Professor Coclanis's CV. He is an economic historian, he works on questions relating broadly to economic development in various parts of the world from the 17th century to the present. He has published widely in US economic history, Southeast Asian economic history, and global economic history, plus a variety of contemporary issues ranging from political economy to culture to sports. He is currently writing a book entitled *Home and the World: Perspectives on the Economic History of the American South*, and has already produced an extraordinarily rich collection of books from *The Plantation Kingdom: the American South and its Global Commodities*, *Rice: Global Networks and New Histories*, all the way back to his first published book, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670 to 1920*. So he is, among other things, extraordinarily qualified to speak on the subject, and we're delighted and proud to be able to present him. Professor Coclanis.

Peter Coclanis

Thank you very much, David. I appreciate the gracious introduction. And I appreciate the invitation extended by NAS and the great hospitality that you and Chance have offered me over the last few weeks. Let me start my talk with a little contextualizing overture or prelude. The term polemic is derived

from the Greek noun *polemos* meaning war and the Greek adjective *polemos*, meaning warlike, or hostile. A polemic is conventionally viewed as a contentious, disputative, or combative form of rhetoric, the intent of which is to espouse or support a particular position, and in so doing undermine another via bold, categorical, often overstated claims of one type or another. Some of the most famous works in western literature are polemical in nature. We can think here of Luther's *95 Theses*, Swift's "Modest Proposal," and Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. They come to mind very readily in this regard, although it should be noted that some would consider Swift's work rather more of a burlesque or satire than a polemic *per se*. I don't wish to diminish these above named works by linking them too closely to the 1619 Project, overseen by Nikole Hannah-Jones and underwritten by the *New York Times*, but in formal terms, 1619 considered *in toto* is a polemic. The intent of this polemic on one level is to dislodge the standard conventional chronology and narrative scaffolding of U.S. history by elevating the importance of racial slavery and what some would call racial capitalism in explaining both America's past and our predicament today. On another level, somewhat shrouded, 1619 actually attempts to make the case, if not clinch it, for reparations to African Americans, reparations due them not only because of slavery, but also because of Jim Crow and decades of state-sponsored discrimination afterward. Indeed, in many ways 1619 can be seen as an anguished, over-the-top extension and elaboration on Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Case for Reparations," which appeared in *The Atlantic* in 2014.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on one's priors, 1619 fails as a polemic in my view. Why? To borrow the language of a reviewer of the *London Times* in 1840, "It is melancholy to find in this polemic, so many words, and so few facts." In the case of 1619 it is accurate facts that are missing. Now, lest I be

accused of being ungenerous, let me compliment the *New York Times* on the graphic design of the August 14th, 2019, issue of its Sunday magazine, and for including the usual puzzles and posers in the back, one of which was actually created by Patrick Berry, brother of Steven Berry, a very eminent Southern historian. The rollout of the project was also impressive, particularly in its magnitude. Regarding the content, as the great historian of slavery Eugene Genovese might have put it "così così:" so-so at best. The pictures and illustrations work well. And the poetry and literary essays are often moving. Some of the essays devoted to historical themes ably summarize and synthesize specialist literature for general audiences. Other essays are curios, at times interesting, but not really consequential. A few are deeply flawed, and one is a train wreck. Regarding the essay in the last category, one is reminded of the quote often attributed to Samuel Johnson about a recently read work of prose, "Your manuscript is both good and original. But the part that is good is not original. And the part that is original is not good." On this more anon.

First a few general comments regarding the 1619 Project as a whole. To cut to the chase, the principal problems with the most objectionable historical pieces in 1619—the framing essay by Hannah-Jones, and the essay by Matthew Desmond—are linked inextricably to, indeed grow inexorably out of the motivation for, the animating spirit behind the project. Bluntly put, despite 1619's historical trappings, it is decidedly, even aggressively, presentist in orientation, the work largely of journalists and engaged scholars, hoping both to operationalize *New York Times* editor Dean Baquet's "secret" 2019 directive to double down on race with the 2020 election in sight, and as a derivative dividend, to provide support for the growing movement for reparations, as Hannah-Jones, the majordomo of the project, has made clear. To me and to other scholars

of a non-activist bent, the spirit behind the project is as chilling as it is brazen, suggesting nothing so much as the famous party slogan in Orwell's *1984*: that who controls the past controls the future, and who controls the present controls the past. The same spirit informs the project's research design. This design, not surprisingly, focuses almost solely on one variable, race, under the erroneous assumption that in so doing the integument shrouding American history will be burst asunder—and I'm using Marxist phraseology intentionally here—puncturing our creation myth, and exposing at long last America's seedy underside. Hence, the jettisoning of the year 1776 in favor of 1619, a year of little historical moment, as I explained elsewhere, but one, it is true, in which a small cargo of African indentured servants or slaves was deposited near Port Comfort in the English colony of Virginia. In the modest words of the editor, Hannah-Jones, the focus on race and the epiphanous year 1619 will finally allow us, "to tell our story truthfully." Really? I think not. For in viewing the complex tapestry of America through one lens and one lens only, that of race, or to be more specific, the racial exploitation of blacks by whites, one misses a lot, even about race, slavery, and exploitation. For example, as Philip D. Morgan's work has demonstrated, there were many more white slaves in Europe in the first half of the 17th century than there were African slaves in Virginia, or in English North America as a whole. Morgan's findings may not mean much to those involved in the 1619 Project, but they are consonant with the rich work of scholars ranging from Orlando Patterson to Thomas Sowell who have documented the presence of slavery in virtually every society all over the world until relatively recently. Not to mention that of historian Kevin Bales, founder of the NGO Free the Slaves, who argues that there are more slaves living in the world today than there ever were during the heyday even of the Atlantic slave trade. Not to belabor the point, but what about Native American slaves, Native American slavehold-

ers, and African American slaveholders in the U.S.? Regarding the last group, African American slaveholders: They numbered over 3,700 in 1830. Many, to be sure, were slaveholders in name only, masters of freed family members in order to keep them in the South. But others were quote unquote, "enslavers," fair and square, including owners of large numbers of slaves, such as the now famous Ellison family of Sumter County, South Carolina, and John C. Stanly of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina, who in the 1820s owned three plantations and 163 slaves. Even the slavery portion of the tapestry, then, is more complicated than the 1619 Projecters would have us believe. And slavery constituted just one small part of that tapestry.

That's the context then, and again, I'd like to thank NAS, David, and Chance for the chance to speak with you all today. This presentation is a very abbreviated kind of talk growing out of a long essay of about 11,000 words, about 40 pages. Slavery figures prominently in a number of essays in 1619, and two, as I suggested earlier, have come under particular fire: The framing essay by Nikole Hannah-Jones, and Matthew Desmond's essay. My essay and my comments today at this forum are on Desmond's essay, and I call the piece that I wrote that I'm drawing from today, "Capitalism, Slavery, and Matthew Desmond's Low-Road History."

Now let me talk a little bit about Desmond and his background, which are relevant to the topics at hand, as we shall see as we go on. Desmond is a very high-profile young professor at Princeton. He's the recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant, awarded, as the foundation puts it, to creative people committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In many ways he's an odd choice for the principal essay on slavery in 1619. For one thing, he's a sociologist rather than a historian. His principal area of specialization is contemporary urban America,

writing in particular on such things as poverty, inequality, housing, social justice and the like. He runs an eviction lab at Princeton, for example. His first book was an ethnographic study of wildlife firefighters in rural Arizona today. He's best known for his best-selling book *Evicted*, which came out in 2016 about the litany of social problems and pathologies associated with eviction in contemporary America.

Now to be fair, he has written on race and race relations, co-authoring two books with his University of Wisconsin dissertation advisor: one a theoretical study trying to lay out a new theory of race, and the other an undergraduate textbook on race relations called *The Racial Order*, which is just out in a new edition. In orientation, that text, the authors point out, is "uncompromisingly intersectional." But other concerns are more germane to our task today. That text contains a brief section on North American slavery in one chapter. It's mostly generic, garden-variety stuff based on secondary sources. But there's one sentence late in that section on slavery, which is telling, where the authors write that "American slavery emerged to meet the needs of colonial exploitation and capitalist expansion." So hang on to that, because that will be relevant later on. Remember as well, that Desmond is not a historian, much less a historian of slavery, much less one who has worked extensively with antebellum sources, much less in archives. Now regarding Desmond, one can't really consider him in depth without saying a few words regarding the New History of American Capitalism movement, upon whose interpretive foundation his case, such as it is, rests. Now, the New History of American Capitalism, in quick form, had its beginnings in the first decade of the 21st century. It was a product of increased public and scholarly interest in themes such as rising inequality, the 1%, the Great Recession, criticism of globalization, etc., etc. The New History of American

Capitalism quickly emerged as a high-profile movement, renewing interest in economic history, which was a dying field for several decades in both history and economics departments. The main thing it did to renew this interest was a rebranding exercise whereby the economic history of the United States was rebranded as the history of capitalism. Its adherents were mostly Ivy Leaguers with associates at other universities, and they mostly have worked thus far on slavery and on America's financial history. If you look at their work, they are not mainstream in the way they do economic history, at least according to the protocols that have developed over the last half century. With a few exceptions, they are fundamentally innumerate. They have little familiarity, at least explicitly, with economic theory or formal methods, and are interested in other topics and themes more than most mainstream economic historians. Their main beliefs, and this is important because they inform Desmond's essay, are that, one, capitalism is inherently bad, with illiberal rather than liberal origins, based from the get go really on power, compulsion, and exploitation. And two: That in America, capitalism arrived early and was based largely on slavery, which laid the foundation for America's development and for its wealth today. Particularly in the 19th century, it was important to America's growth and development. Why? Because of slavery's links with the rise of the cotton economy, which was not only, in their view, the principal source of America's development in the 19th century, but is closely connected to the later history of capitalist development in America, which in their view has always been based on exploitation and expropriation, albeit taking different forms and expressions over time. The stars of this movement are people like Sven Beckert at Harvard, Ed Baptist at Cornell, Walter Johnson—who, technically, does not consider himself part of the movement but travels in the same circles—also at Harvard, Calvin Schermerhorn at Arizona State, Seth Rockman at Brown,

Caitlin Rosenthal at Berkeley, and Louis Hyman at Cornell. Now, Desmond takes the New History American Capitalism baton and runs with it, combining, in my view, in a very procrustean way, the two main themes of the movement—slavery and financial history. He argues, in fact, that slavery led directly to financialization in the U.S. today, not merely to greater inequality, the rise of the 1%, neoliberal policies, deregulation, the Great Recession, etc., etc., but directly even to people like “Pharma Bro” Martin Shkreli. Indeed, it’s with Shkreli that Desmond leads off his article. For Desmond, the link between all these things, and particularly the link connecting slavery and financialization, derives from a formulation developed by one of his ex-professors at Wisconsin, the sociologist Joel Rogers. The formulation is called “low road capitalism,” which Desmond says was pioneered by southern planters in the antebellum period. When a capitalist society goes low, Desmond claims, and here’s a quote, “wages are depressed as businesses compete over the price, not the quality of goods. So-called unskilled workers are typically incentivized through punishments not through promotions. Inequality reigns, and poverty spreads.” The burden of the argument in my piece is that what Desmond’s essay amounts to, really, is low-road history. Let me stress again that because Desmond has no background studying slavery or the antebellum South, he relies almost exclusively on work by New Historians of American Capitalism, despite the battering that they have taken from professional economic historians, virtually none of whom buy their arguments, particularly the attempts by New Historians of American Capitalism to use numbers, which is the stock and trade of modern economic historians and modern economic history.

Now, here’s a thumbnail sketch of Desmond’s South and the role of slavery therein before I go through these points *serialim* and try to debunk them. Accord-

ing to Desmond, “enslavers”—that is the preferred coinage of the New Historians of American Capitalism—and their enablers in finance and banking created a South dominated and informed by large, modern, capitalistic, quote unquote “slave labor camps,” that is to say, farm units and plantations. Enslavers are said to have worked their slaves mercilessly and brutally to produce cotton for export in a system whose low gear was torture. That last phrase comes from Ed Baptist. Cotton for export built the U.S. economy in the antebellum period, and set the tone for America’s low-road capitalism ever since. The enslavers were modern in their calibrated use of coercion, and in their fixation with proto-scientific management and accounting. But their maniacal greed and low-road brutality rendered the antebellum Southern economy highly speculative and unstable, subject to periodic but predictable panics and busts, such as the Panic of 1837, which Desmond sees as analogous to the Great Recession. And these busts were caused by the depredations of rapaciously speculative southern capitalist planters and their collaborators in commerce and banking. That’s the argument as laid out by Desmond in his modification and adaptation of the New History of American Capitalism position.

Now, economic historians and mainstream historians working in other fields of American history have been quick to criticize much of this position as it has been articulated in books and articles by New Historians of American Capitalism. In the case of slavery and the economics of slavery, none of these critiques has been more comprehensive or effective than that done by two very distinguished economic historians of agriculture, Alan Olmstead of Cal-Davis and Paul Rhode of the University of Michigan, who have basically punctured the entire argument raised by the New Historians of American Capitalism and taken up by Desmond, particularly the part of the argument concerned with the economics of

slavery and the causes of rising productivity in cotton, which causes were, in Olmstead and Rhodes' view, not torture, but innovations in organization, machinery, and particularly biology, the introduction of a new strain of cotton which allowed for higher yields and higher picking rates. They have also challenged effectively the New Historians of American Capitalism's positions (and, thus, Desmond's) on the role of cotton in the U.S. economy and the importance of slavery for U.S. development as a whole, both of which positions Olmstead and Rhode see as vastly overstated.

Now, in my paper, I summarize and elaborate upon some of these points, giving proper credit to those who have in fact developed these critiques. But I focus more on Desmond's attempt to link slavery and financialization, which is the most procrustean part of this entire argument. That is to say, I look very closely at the link that Desmond sees between antebellum southern plantation management, finance, and banking practices *and* neoliberalism and financialization, which he sees as the dominant themes of America's political economy over the past 20 or 30 years, themes that in his view have devastated the American economy and much of the American population. Desmond's argument on the link between antebellum slavery and "low-road" capitalism in America today is based almost entirely on work done by the New Historians of American Capitalism, particularly one edited volume put out by people associated with the movement, a book called *Slavery's Capitalism*, edited by Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman and published in 2016. In this collection, Desmond borrows and elaborates upon the work of four or five scholars: Bonnie Martin, Ed Baptist, Calvin Schermerhorn, Josh Rothman, and Caitlin Rosenthal. The components of his allegations are as follows, which I lay out and critique more systematically in the longer essay from which this talk is derived. Desmond emphasizes, among other things,

the fact that slaves were mortgaged in the antebellum period, and were used as collateral for securing debts, which he seems to think is a huge research find, which leads linearly to financialization today, i.e., low-road capitalism. No economic historian worth his or her salt would be surprised by the finding that slaves were mortgaged. What is so surprising about the fact that slaves constituted a significant class of collateral in the antebellum period? They were a legal class of property in 1860, comprising forty-five to fifty percent of southern wealth. Why should this form of wealth not be used as collateral? Collateral, to be good, needs to retain value; it needs to be easy to liquidate; and it has to be relatively fungible. And slaves were just like land, livestock, tools, household goods, stock certificates, life insurance policies, etc. There's nothing really surprising about that.

Secondly, Desmond, in this section, makes a very big deal about the use of debt instruments in the slave economy, particularly bills of exchange and the existence of credit relationships across international boundaries, which he sees as somehow pernicious and unique to the slave economy. However, nothing the South did in terms of debt instruments or transatlantic credit transactions, networks, or financial innovation was unique to the South, much less pioneered in it. Instruments such as bills of credit, bills of exchange, paper money, practices such as discounting bills of exchange, and the emergence of commercial banks, life insurance, credit reporting, etc., all appeared earlier and in more sophisticated ways in the North than in the South, if anyone had bothered to look.

A third point is the emphasis that Desmond makes on speculation. He somehow thinks that southerners were uniquely prone to specialization—tulip bubbles, anyone?—and that southerners were unique in their speculative abandon. I believe that such views are

way off base. Panics have proven intermittent occurrences in capitalist economies, not constitutive of them. Moreover, Desmond—like Josh Rothman from whom he draws heavily—doesn't really understand or appreciate the real economic function of speculation and speculators. Speculators are not good or bad, but efficient or inefficient. The economic role of a speculator is at once to absorb excess risk and to provide liquidity when necessary. They help to render more efficient the intertemporal distribution of resources under conditions of uncertainty. No one knows what the future will hold and speculators are taking a risk in holding and distributing resources over time. They are part of an investment constellation that includes hedgers, arbitrageurs, and normal investors, and each in a functioning financial market performs a discrete function.

Another part of the argument laid out by Desmond has it that southern “enslavers” practiced scientific management assiduously in their “factories in the fields,” and in their accounting practices. Here, he draws primarily from the work of Caitlin Rosenthal. “Enslavers” are accused of intensely systematic organizational behavior, including precociously calculated accounting methods, which included depreciation of their slave assets, and even cost accounting. Close analysis of the evidence in this regard doesn't support this position, however. The account books that have been looked at quite closely by a number of scholars, Rhode, Olmstead, and a young scholar named Ian Beamish, have shown conclusively that there was little systemic order and regulation really in the way Southern planters did their accounts, and very few, if any, real attempts at anything like cost accounting and depreciation.

There is Desmond's South. Now, let's move on to the *real* South, which in my view, is very different economically from the South laid out in Desmond's essay. While I would agree that the South could be

considered a capitalist economy of a sort, and that slavery was important in it, these claims must be contextualized. In the remainder of my comments today, let me make a few observations regarding the southern economy, then I'll stop and answer questions. First, I believe—and again, this is something that not everyone believes—that the South can be considered a capitalistic economy, not only in the antebellum period, but even earlier, in the 18th century. And I use this label despite the fact that slaves were prominent in parts of the South early on, in the Chesapeake colonies, the lower South, and in the British West Indies if you want to include the Caribbean colonies in our analysis. So the conjunction of slavery and capitalism works for me, but a good bit earlier than it really does for the New Historians of Capitalism and for Desmond. If the forced link between antebellum slavery and financialization is spurious, what can we legitimately say about slavery's role in the antebellum South, and indeed in the antebellum U.S. more generally? I think we could say quite a bit. Just in terms of numbers, however, keep in mind that only about a quarter or twenty-five percent of the free families in the antebellum South held slaves. And the modal number of slaves held was one, that is to say, the number coming up most amongst those who held slaves. Out of the one quarter of the families that held slaves in the 1850s, only about one out of twelve could we call planters. That is, about three percent of free families in the South would be considered planter families under the most common definition—twenty or more slaves. If you use another frequently-used threshold for planter status, that is to say, twenty or more working hands, that percentage is even smaller.

Now secondly, I would stress with William Freehling, Lacy Ford, and others, that there was no one South, but really many Souths in the antebellum period, in some of which slavery was unimportant and in other parts by 1860 it was dying out. I would

also point out that some leading experts, including Philip Curtin, one of the most eminent writers on slavery and the slave trade, felt slavery was insufficiently important in North America as to include the South in either edition of his classic *Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex*. In Curtin's view, the South was a society with slaves rather than a slave society. Now, after offering Curtin's viewpoint, I would be quick to add that I don't buy that argument about the South. I believe that the region, despite the small percentage of planters, should be considered a slave society controlled by planters and their associates in commerce and finance. Why? Because power cannot be reduced, in my view, to numbers and percentages alone. Moreover, I would go on to argue that, despite the fact that the South had slaves, it should not be considered pre-capitalist in any way. The presence of slavery should not be viewed as evidence that the South was pre-capitalist because this institution, like the second serfdom in Eastern Europe at about the same time, should be seen as an expression of an emerging capitalism related to the discrete labor conditions and needs in certain areas. The same liberal dimensions of early capitalism that led to freer and freer labor forms in some areas, led elsewhere in some cases, including in parts of British America in the early modern period, especially in the West Indies, the Chesapeake, South Carolina, and Georgia. In these areas, the market-driven desire by Europeans and European Americans to organize and sustain production of staple crops for export—sugar, tobacco, rice, and indigo (this was before cotton)—led them in many, if not most cases, to favor enslaved African American and African laborers. Why? For several reasons. It was difficult in the Western Hemisphere, which was land abundant and labor scarce, to secure free labor and retain it in place, particularly for onerous jobs in unhealthy climates. After numerous trials and experiments with other groups, European and European American agricultural entrepreneurs and their commercial allies found

that Africans and African American laborers constituted the best fit for their labor needs. Africans were in many cases already familiar with routinized agricultural labor, and in some cases may have possessed proprietary knowledge regarding agriculture and certain crops, particularly rice. They had some natural and inherited immunities to certain mosquito-borne diseases that killed other laborers in higher proportions. And they were considered by Europeans and Euro-Americans to be “others”—ethnically, racially, religiously, culturally—and as such were assumed to possess fewer natural rights, privileges, and immunities that needed to be respected than did alternative groups.

Slavery, however immoral from our point of view, was thus seen as the labor form that made the most economic sense in some areas, provided that the supply of African slaves was sufficient to meet labor needs, and that the prices were reasonable. For the most part these requirements were met. Note, though, that the prices of slaves generally speaking were not low, but relatively high. That's one of the problems with the New History of American Capitalism line. Acquiring and deploying slaves was not mainly a decision made because of low cost, but, as Gavin Wright among others has shown, on the bundle of property rights related to slavery, which allowed those that owned slaves to position them wherever they wanted to, even in unhealthy places, work them hard and long, even mercilessly, and retain them and their progeny as long as desired. These rights did not obtain to anywhere near the same degree with other possible forms of labor. Thus, the emergence of slavery in certain areas.

I go on to argue in the essay I prepared for this conference that slavery was vital to the South's growth, beginning in the late 17th century, not in 1619, not in 1650, or even 1660, but in the last quarter of the 17th century, and remained so until the time of

the Civil War. Slaves were deployed throughout the economy in that hundred and seventy-year period or so, but were especially important as agricultural laborers producing subsistence crops as well as staples for export. The most important of these staples in the antebellum period was cotton. But remember that corn rather than cotton was the most important southern crop in terms of value. And remember too that cotton, the leading export in the United States by far, nonetheless comprised a very small proportion of GDP, usually around five or six percent. Now the New History of American Capitalism view and Desmond's view is that cotton totally dominated the U.S. economy in the antebellum period, comprising as much as forty percent or even more of the U.S. economy. This is grossly exaggerated, based largely on Ed Baptist's unfamiliarity with national income accounting protocols, particularly with how GDP is constructed. Such unfamiliarity led Baptist to double and sometimes triple count the size of the cotton economy by adding to the value of cotton production the value of all inputs used in its production, when, according to national income accounting protocols, those inputs are already subsumed into the sale price of cotton. This is a big measurement error, but one that has not been admitted by Baptist, and has gone unremarked upon by New Historians of American Capitalism, who continue to use and stand by Baptist's figures despite the repudiation of said figures by measurement experts.

In closing—a few last points on the Southern economy. In relative terms, the Southern economy performed well in many ways in the antebellum period. And if severed from the U.S. and considered as a stand-alone economy, the South was one of the wealthier parts of the world in 1860. The region's wealth was based largely on agriculture, particularly upon that part of the sector deploying slave labor to produce staples for export. The region's manufactur-

ing sector was not inconsequential, however, particularly for the age. But the South was clearly not urbanizing or industrializing at nearly the rate of the North, with agricultural and commercial groups preferring instead to pursue policies predicated on the continued push westward of the cotton economy, in so doing expanding, as Drew McCoy put it long ago, across space rather than through time. The planters, merchants, bankers, and politicians who led this push westward were more or less forward looking and modern in their thinking, but they hardly represented the capitalist vanguard in the Western world. And their work sites, the plantations, were hardly factories in the fields.

Now while the mean income and wealth of the free population were relatively high and grew, the region was also home to many poor people: Not only the slaves but also some of the free people. With this point in mind, the last point I'll cover is who benefited from slavery? Not the slaves, obviously. And much of the free population in the region probably didn't gain much either, although some certainly did even if they weren't slaveholders, through the economic links and connections with the slave-labor-based agricultural economy. What about the region *qua* region? This is a difficult question to answer because the trajectory of the southern economy was disrupted, then irrevocably changed with the Civil War. But I've argued at length elsewhere, along with many other scholars, that while the southern economy was growing in the antebellum period, the growth path taken was not necessarily conducive to long-term development. Like other plantation economies around the world, that of the South was unbalanced and overly specialized, marked by relatively low levels of urbanization, particularly in the interior. It had a rudimentary conveyor-belt transport system, designed to facilitate exports and imports rather than knit the region together economically, and very low levels of investment in human capital. Few plantation

economies anywhere in the world have ever developed into modern high-performance economies, and none based on slave labor have. And numerous studies have demonstrated the long-term negative effects of plantation-based slavery on those parts of the South where it took firm hold. So slavery or slavery's capitalism almost certainly did not promote the economic well-being of the region over the long run. That much is clear.

This said, consumers of agricultural products produced by southern slaves likely paid a bit less whether in the South, the North, or Europe, than they would have had said products been produced by free labor. And merchants, bankers, and manufacturers within and without the region benefited in various ways from their involvement as well. Assessing the degree to which these individuals and firms benefited is difficult, however, because little is yet known regarding the opportunity costs they would have incurred by forgoing investment in the slave economy.

One thing is clear, though: The U.S. economy, unlike the southern economy, was not based on slavery in the 19th century. Although cotton produced in the South was important early on to the textile industry in New England, in the larger scheme of things the most important economic developments of the century—urbanization and industrialization in the northeastern quadrant of the United States, and the creation of the dynamic agro-industrial complex of the Midwest—owed relatively little to slavery. Cotton, one recalls, could be produced with free labor. It was much more important in the South after the Civil War and emancipation and the demise of slavery than it ever was before the war. Production didn't peak until the 1920s, and cotton's importance to the American textile industry followed the same pattern. Indeed, it is more accurate to say that slavery distorted rather

than directed capitalist development in America. Slavery constituted an illiberal expression of early capitalism in certain contexts—in labor-scarce, land-abundant areas during the so called primitive accumulation of early capitalism. The principal thrust of capitalism, however, was liberal and progressive, resulting in greater economic freedom. The forces unleashed by capitalism that brought slavery to British America, and sustained slavery for a period thereafter, later led to the rise among some and then among many of what Thomas Haskell has famously called “the humanitarian sensibility” that led Great Britain and the U.S. to abolish slavery relatively early in the modern period, far earlier than in many other parts of the world, especially in Africa and the Middle East.

Slavery in the American South was an abomination. But Matthew Desmond, taking his cues from the New Historians of American Capitalism, grossly misrepresents it in order to render the financialization of the U.S. economy its lineal descendant. Clearly, Desmond would do well to look elsewhere for the roots of financialization and to who or what begat Martin Shkreli. Thank you.

David Randall

Thank you so much. I'm getting my video on. A wonderful speech. Wonderful to hear it. I am going to start passing on some questions, with some of my own put in. Here's one question which I'm going to add to: “I have a grandchild who is starting school this year, will she learn the story of slavery in the United States through the lens of 1619?”

I want to push that to a question of teaching—that is, not just what the grandchild will learn, but how they should be learning it. What should they have learned in high school to prepare them for this? You teach this yourself at the introductory level at college, how

do you teach this? And I'd push that: to students who are hostile to learning this interpretation to begin with?

Peter Coelanis

Yes, those are tough questions, especially right out of the gate. But I think history is complex. It's tragedy, not melodrama. And I think that what we need to talk about when we talk about slavery is placing it in the context of the entire unfolding of an American narrative, which I believe was liberal from the start. It's not a perfect story. Slavery is a blemish on our history. But it is not all of our history. And certainly, one always has to ask the question, or frame the question when looking at American history, as compared to what? Compared to what other areas does American history get judged? I believe that the main thrust of American development from the get go was liberal. And slavery, like the second serfdom in Eastern Europe, arose from a particular set of conditions for a period of time. But ultimately, the forces related to private property, economic freedom, and competition—that is to say, capitalism—unleashed in the American nation forces that overthrew the slave regime and promoted the American progressive experiment over time. There's no need to whitewash slavery or pretend it didn't exist. But by overstating it so drastically as the people in the 1619 Project do, in their zeal to make it the only criterion upon which to look at American history, I think one does severe damage to the historical record. There are many good liberal historians who have studied slavery and can teach it very effectively without overstating either its importance, its legacy, or its embraciveness in the American past.

Most of the economic historians who have been quite critical of the New Historians of American Capitalism—and Desmond's piece—are Democrats, I would say. Politically they're not what would be

considered by some of their opponents people who are revanchist or coming at things from a very atavistic perspective. So, I think it can be taught, and it has been taught quite well.

One thing about the way economic history and its findings can improve is the way we disseminate and talk about the information for the general public. One of the things that the New Historians of American Capitalism do quite well is write. They're good writers. They communicate what I believe are flawed findings, but they do so effectively, and that's one reason I think for their purchase. There's a math barrier that many Americans can't overcome in trying to deal with modern economic history. And I think that economic historians in both economics and history departments would do well to try to render their findings more understandable to general audiences, and also to work together a little bit more harmoniously. Economists who study economic history and work in it and historians who work in economic history are sometimes at loggerheads because of differences in the way they frame questions, the use of modeling, the use of inductive or deductive reasoning, things like that.

David Randall

I've got a related question. The correct history of the economics of American slavery, is there a single or a few books or articles you would recommend? If your own article is about to be forthcoming and published that would be wonderful to know too.

Peter Coelanis

Well, there are some good historiographic works and reference books that cover a lot of this stuff. Not necessarily to tout work to which I have contributed, but there are a couple of excellent reference works on slavery, one that Oxford University Press put out a

number of years ago, and a more recent four-volume history put out by Cambridge University Press, in which one can find lots of different essays on various aspects of slavery and emancipation. For the Oxford volume, which was edited by Mark Smith and by Bob Paquette, I wrote an essay, for example, on the economics of slavery. It's a synthetic essay based on the work of many fine economic historians. And for the *World History of Slavery* that Cambridge put out in four volumes, edited by Stan Engerman, David Eltis, Seymour Drescher, and David Richardson—all very eminent figures in the literature on slavery and emancipation—I wrote a piece on emancipation and its aftermath. So in both of those pieces I tried to summarize and synthesize the literature. But these volumes contain a wealth of information on all aspects of slavery. Very good historians like Mark Smith and Peter Kolchin and Peter Parish have written syntheses of slavery and the economics of slavery as well. And those are also quite useful.

One of the problems with the economic literature of slavery is that much of it is technical and appears in journal form. And often there's a bit of math involved in some of the work because some of the questions are framed so that you can formally test a hypothesis. So I would look to the syntheses and these reference works for good quick takes on questions relating to slavery. The economic history community has an internet presence, and there is a kind of encyclopedia on what's known as eh.net that has very good up-to-date pieces by some of the major figures in economic history who have studied slavery closely.

David Randall

Thank you. I have a question following up from some of the previous sessions. While in the political realm there's the recommendation to go back to the original sources and read the debates of the founding to understand what was going on in the minds of

people doing the convention, can one and should one do that for economic history? Are there people who understood accurately what was happening in the economy at the time? Or is this all something assembled later by economic historians?

Peter Coelanis

Yes, those are very good points. And these are points that economic historians often wrestle with. No one in the South in 1860 knew the inequality coefficient for wealth among white southerners or things like that. However, there are lots of sources available that would allow people to get a good, broad view—a profile of the Southern economy—from datasets that have been assembled and are widely available to the public now. There's a big sample that many people have used of the cotton economy in the South in 1860. Paul Rhode and Alan Olmstead have methodically combed through the cotton economy and have done amazingly complete work using archival account books and all kinds of plantation daybooks and record books. And they continue to publish their findings. The point you raised, though, about what was known at the time is a good one. I remember in his 1981 presidential address to the American Historical Association, Bernard Bailyn made a distinction between history that is manifest—that everyone is aware of at the time—and so-called latent history—(facts, events, etc.) that we only know later, or that people are only dimly aware of at the time—and one has to keep that in mind when trying to account for historical causation and things like that. And economic historians don't always do that, when they come up with a finding based on research done a century and a half later that shows that maybe more people should have revolted at a particular time, because wealth inequality at that time was so high. One has to keep in mind—always—what was known at the time and what was only unearthed and teased out much later as a result of assiduous research by

beavering scholars.

David Randall

Another follow up question, then. How much do students, and professors also, need to know about what it's like to work on a farm, whether free or slave? It seems to me that there must be vanishingly few people now who know what it's like to work on a cotton plantation, period. And I suspect the number of people who simply work on a farm must be getting to be smaller and smaller each year. How much do you need to teach that? And, practically, how much do you have to teach that to your students, your colleagues? How much should that be part of the history for high school students?

Peter Coelanis

It's very important. Today, about 1% of the American labor force is involved in agriculture and the levels of intermediation between food production and consumers and college students are great even in rural areas and even in ag schools now. Many of the people coming into ag schools and studying agriculture may not be from farm backgrounds anymore. I did a visit a couple years ago to an agricultural high school in the middle of Chicago where people are learning agribusiness, but they had never set foot on a farm prior to an internship during the summer.

But this is very important. And one of the real problems, I think, in understanding slavery and agriculture is that agriculture itself is so far removed from daily experience in most parts of the world. In 2007, more than half of the world's population became quote unquote "urban" for the first time, which is kind of suggestive of what's happening. And I think agriculture as a whole is becoming harder and harder to fathom for many of our students and I think a real effort has to be made early on to try to get people to

establish a kind of empathy and an understanding of agriculture, what it means to be living on a farm. The field of agricultural history in recent decades has undergone a renaissance because there have been a couple of new movements that have come into it. The history of food is becoming quite popular amongst the urban middle class, and suburbanites. And they are kind of vertically integrating backward into agriculture and starting to study agriculture. Similarly, environmental history, which is a popular field, has students who are interested in agriculture. So I think that if you frame agriculture a little bit more broadly, and look at it as part of a food system and an environmental system, then I think you can arouse more interest in studying agriculture and agricultural history, including that part of it which occurred in the South before 1860.

David Randall

Shifting from agriculture to something else, it seems to me that part of what the 1619 Project is assuming is some sort of tight connection between American economics and American culture as a whole. It's a slave economic system, and therefore a slave culture, which becomes a racist culture and so forth. This leads to an interesting question, how do you think of the relationship of economics to culture for the Americans South? How much is a pre-existing Anglo American culture forming the slave system? How much is the slave economic system, then, reaching out and reshaping the culture? I ask you this because I think this speaks more broadly to the 1619 Project and its assumptions.

Peter Coelanis

Yes, certainly, there's not an old base/superstructure model in which the economic system is informing and driving everything else. Economics and culture go back and forth. And there's a lot of causative

arrows pointing in each direction in terms of the relationship between culture and economics, not only in the South, but in other parts of the United States, as well. I would argue that in the South, by and large, during the period in which slavery was part of the southern economy, most southerners partook, generally speaking, of the same liberal capitalist culture as was the case in the rest of the United States. Maybe not to as advanced a degree, but a number of intellectual historians over the last few decades who have written about southerners have seen them very much in the mainstream of Western culture in the 19th century.

The South, where it was once considered backward and closed to new developments in the Western tradition, is now seen as very much part and parcel of that evolving tradition, partaking in the same debates in the antebellum period as did their northern colleagues. Some, like Michael O'Brien and David Moltke-Hansen, have argued that they were as well versed in Romanticism as New Englanders in the 1840s and 50s, but were probably closer to the root of things because they were very much attuned to German culture and French culture and British culture as well as what was happening stateside. So I believe that it is erroneous to reduce southern society and culture to slavery in the antebellum period, much less in the 18th century, even going back to Port Comfort in 1619. Many scholars have written on the power of religious ideas in shaping our culture and our traditions, and many others have stressed Lockean and republican ideas as well. So I think it is a very complex, intricate, integrated tapestry that we're talking about. And one of the real problems with 1619 is its attempt to reduce the entire manifold American experience to race, slavery, and racial exploitation from the get go.

David Randall

Thank you. I had a question from an audience member. How is it that historians have lost the plot on this subject?

Peter Coelanis

Of slavery, or American history?

David Randall

American history, or economic history, yes, how is it that the 1619 narrative has captured the professional historical imagination?

Peter Coelanis

Well, I wouldn't say it has captured it entirely. But, that said, many historians are responding to the present situation in the United States, and are trying to find historical connections to help to explain it to them in terms of historical racial disparities. And many see a plausible link between the early beginnings when most Africans and African Americans were in fact enslaved in the United States, and the present differentials in social stratification in the United States. One problem is that economic historians have not weighed in, in a systematic way, on a big enough platform with enough amplification to really get their views disseminated widely, not only in the historical community, but also with the general public. Economic history is a very small field, both in economics and in history departments. It was almost dying in both until the last decade or so, when the New Historians of American Capitalism, appealing to people who felt estranged from or opposed to the current form of capitalism in the United States, found meaning in their rather simplistic explanation of our past.

I think economic historians can do more to render

their technical work more accessible to a broader audience. And they would be doing us all a favor if they did so. Many of the spurious conclusions and findings and quote unquote, “facts,” disseminated by the New Historians of American Capitalism and used by Desmond in his piece have been systematically repudiated and refuted in the specialist literature, but such repudiations and refutations haven’t been widely publicized. It’s hard to understand why. Some people might be intentionally avoiding such work because they fear the conclusions, but in part it’s because it can be difficult to read modern economic history, because most work in the genre is technical, requires some experience with numbers, with formal methods and statistics, things like that. But I think we would all do well to try to find ways to disseminate a more accurate portrayal of the Southern economy. And doing so does not mean denying that slavery was horrible, immoral, and often very brutal, but it was other things as well. And on a day-to-day level, there were often nuances that are lost in a depiction of the economy in which torture is an everyday occurrence used by merciless “enslavers” to ratchet up productivity on a daily basis. From an economic historian’s standpoint, the principal problems of 1619 relate to gross over-simplification and overstatement, which led perforce to a massive misrepresentation of the economics of slavery in the antebellum South.

David Randall

Thank you. Could links to articles on the subject be sent to us? We could then spread it on social media and educate many more, if you would be so kind as to send me a brief list of things people should read.

Peter Coelanis

Oh, that would be wonderful.

David Randall

We could then add that to the web page. That should be on the to-do list.

I’m going to frame a slightly different question. Again, this is getting back to the teaching. Let’s say that you’re teaching a course on American economic history, and you have five sessions, an intensive week or two, on American history from the invention of the cotton gin to the outbreak of the Civil War. How many of those five sessions would you devote to Southern economic history, slave history, and the interrelations of slavery with the North? How much would you devote to other aspects of American economic history?

Peter Coelanis

If I had only five or six sessions on that whole period, I would devote one, probably, to slavery or to a comparative analysis of Northern-Southern economic trajectories in the 19th century. I would certainly begin that whole enterprise with a very close look at the Constitution, which anyone who’s interested in America’s development, particularly its capitalist development, should read very closely. Most economic historians in recent decades, regardless of ideology or particular interest, have stressed the importance of laws and institutions in framing the possibilities of growth and development—or impeding those possibilities. So I would start with a good close look at the Constitution and our institutions. I would look at how we came out of the colonial period, what was our starting point. I would spend some time on the early developments in transportation and in business organization. Demographic developments are quite important, especially if spread over space, I would look at that. And then I would basically try to fit in the South’s developmental pattern as part of a national economic development experience.

The South shared many things with other regions in

the United States in the first half of the 19th century—transport improvements, infrastructure improvements, the beginnings of manufacturing, urban developments, immigration, etc. Lots of important economic factors affected North and South alike. And it's somewhat skewed to focus only on slavery when you're looking at the South. I did a paper a few years ago, for example, in which I looked at innovation and patenting in the South in the antebellum period, and while it isn't New England, there are parts of the South that had significant traditions of innovation. And I looked in particular at South Carolina and compared it to a couple of other places. And the South is not a total outlier, by any means.

David Randall

I'm going to ask a question about a slightly different essay in the 1619 Project, and I know this isn't quite your specialty, but I thought I might try to put it in. The frontier. One of the essays said that slavery was vitally important for the American frontier, its expansion, and the economics of slavery. Would you be willing to speak on that particular essay's take on the frontier and what you think the role of slavery was in the expansion of the frontier?

Peter Coelanis

It is important because of the mindset of southern planters in the 19th century, a mindset in which it generally made a lot more sense to push west rather than to try to constantly improve "old" land. The price of land was very low for a variety of reasons, including pushing out Native Americans, and there was a drive westward and actually eastward in some cases to fill in parts of the South that had been passed over, particularly Florida in the 1850s. But frontier expansion is important. And that's Tiya Miles's article that you're referring to. But one has to keep in mind that even in 1860, 85% of the cotton produced in

the South was produced east of the Mississippi and very little in Texas, which is the focus of that piece. Texas develops in the 1850s and its cotton frontier develops much more in the late 19th century and in the 20th century, when western Texas and then Arizona become great cotton areas. But it's not nearly as important in the antebellum period. So I think there is a drive westward, just as there was in the North during the same period. It's interesting, after the Civil War one of the most dynamic Southern agricultural export industries, rice, was reinvented by Northerners who came south and reinvented the rice industry of the South in southwestern Louisiana, southeastern Texas, and east central Arkansas. So they were developing new frontiers in areas in the South that had not yet developed.

David Randall

Thank you. Another question from the audience. Why is it not pointed out that the North was directly benefiting from slavery if they were buying raw materials harvested with slaves? And I want to increase that question—how should one teach the Northern economy's dependence on slavery: the scope, the methods, the importance?

Peter Coelanis

Well, I wouldn't necessarily say *dependence* on slavery. We had an increasingly integrated economy and northerners were certainly involved in the slave economy. There's no question about that. We've known that for a long time. People have studied particularly areas like New York City, which was very, very much connected to the South's economy in the 1840s and 1850s. To say that an area is connected to the slave economy, however, doesn't mean it's necessarily dependent upon it. The Northeast was connected to the Midwest as well by the middle of the 19th century. One of the great virtues of Article One of the

Constitution was to create a free trade zone within the United States, which made it the biggest free trade zone in the world at the time. And there were people and goods transacting back and forth in this period. The interconnections of North and South are not to be denied. But it's one thing to say that they are connected and another to say that the North was dependent on American cotton. The New England textile industry was a relatively small component of America's economy in 1860 in any case.

David Randall

Which, given how much we focus on New England factories and textiles, that's a fascinating thing to realize.

Peter Coelanis

The biggest source of—Oh, go ahead.

David Randall

No, no, you first please.

Peter Coelanis

Well, I was just going to say, in terms of capital formation in the United States in 1860, the biggest or second biggest individual component was land clearing, not factory building or anything like that. It was the clearing of land that added to the value of land and that formed the biggest or second biggest, depends on how you measure it, component of our whole capital formation process in the 19th century. Only 20% of the United States as a whole was urban in 1860. Most people were farmers, North and South. The key, I would argue, was not the connection between the North and the South for America's development in the middle of the 19th century, but the intricate interlaced development of farm and

city in the Midwest, the creation of this agro-industrial economy, which began to interact very closely and over time to build up significant wealth, with a strong, rich, dynamic agricultural sector that interacted with the cities and then became a great export center as well in the late 19th century, leading among other things to the so-called wheat invasion of Europe by Midwestern (and Western) farmers. And it was this form of agriculture that was, for the times, relatively high tech, capital intensive, and "scientific." That was the normative experience. The South's agricultural sector became retrograde and backward in the late 19th century—low technology, low wage, low skill, low productivity, while the North's went in an entirely different direction. It was largely because of the close connections between agriculture and industry. Cyrus Hall McCormick, remember, started out in Virginia, moved out to Cincinnati, and then to Chicago, where the McCormick Reaper Works, later International Harvester, became a great interface between farm and factory, city and rural.

David Randall

Thank you. We're getting near to the end. I could ask you another question, but do you feel comfortable at this point in wanting to make any closing remarks? Would you like to hear at least one more question as we approach 12:30?

Peter Coelanis

You can ask another question. The paper I wrote is a little bit more systematic than my remarks today. And I left out a lot of the evidence that I had adduced in putting together the argument. At the end of the day, though, the main problem with Desmond's essay was related to his presentist orientation and his attempt to look back from one of his own areas of expertise, the financialization of the American economy and what he sees as a low-road form of capitalism

today, and try to tie it to this project, which I think doesn't work very well. It would be much, much easier to connect financialization, if one wanted to, with developments in the Northeast in the 19th century. There's a very able scholar named Richard White, who's affiliated with the New Historians of American Capitalism, who has written very powerful, well researched books on the creation of the railroad industry in the 19th century. His studies demonstrate that if one wants to look for financial chicanery and all kinds of "low-road" capitalist developments, one would do better to look at the New York Central Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad, etc., than at slavery in the antebellum South. In doing so one could also plot out a more plausible genealogy for Martin Shkreli and the Turing Drug Company than one would by focusing on "enslavers" in the antebellum South.

David Randall

Is your essay already planned for publication somewhere?

Peter Coelanis

Not yet. I wrote it with this conference in mind, so I don't have firm plans for it yet. I still have to finish the notes in any case.

David Randall

It might be fun, if and when you finish it, to see if we could have a chance to put it up on the web if you're willing to do that. You can say no later at your leisure. I'm just putting this out now. I do think that people here would all be fascinated to have the chance to see the full argument.

Peter Coelanis

Economic historians do that all the time. They often put up working papers on a website in order to solicit feedback. It's a very welcoming community, even though economists have the reputation often of being barracudas and very forceful at argumentation and brutal. They actually are pretty friendly and open. The community is pretty helpful in terms of offering criticism, and people put up their stuff and circulate it widely in order to get closer to an accurate representation of the past.

David Randall

Well we would love to put it up in association with our webpages here. Or if you put it up elsewhere, we will be glad to do a link to it. I think everybody would be very happy to see the full argument. And since a large part of this is what are the counter arguments one should have to the 1619 Project for the public, it would be useful not just for scholars, but for people wanting to show it to their local school boards and say, hey, look at this.

Peter Coelanis

I agree. Anything that we can do to try to promote a little bit more balance in our representation of our early history would be welcome.

David Randall

Lovely. All right. Thank you so much. I'm going to give a quick shout out that our next panel discussion is at 2pm, Teaching American History. Moderator Tom Lindsey with Richard Johnson, Robert Maranto, and Jamie Gass. And having done the publicity for that, again thank you so much for that really wonderful speech.

Peter Coelanis

Let me thank the audience for bearing with the technology and the transformation of the live conference into a Zoominar or whatever we are doing. Thanks, David.

David Randall

Thank you. Have a lovely day.

Peter Coelanis

You too.

Chance Layton

Bye now.

What Made American Slavery Distinctive?

Robert Paquette

David Randall

Welcome to the Thursday morning session of Slavery or Freedom, our week long online conference about the 1619 Project and its relationship to history and public policy, sponsored by the National Association of Scholars, the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization, and the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Now, we are delighted this Thursday morning to have as our speaker on what makes American slavery distinctive or unique, Robert L. Paquette, a prize-winning historian who has published extensively on the history of slavery in the Americas. He received his PhD in history with honors from the University of Rochester in 1982. In 2007, he co-founded the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization in Clinton, New York. In 2014, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and the American Conservative Union Foundation awarded him the Jeane Jordan Kirkpatrick Prize for Academic Freedom. His quite extensive list of books includes the *Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, published in 2010. And I know he has, among other things, another book coming up soon, which I'm blanking on the title immediately, but he should tell everybody about it so they can all rush out to buy it.

Before I let him speak, I'll just mention, this is the bit where he speaks for perhaps half an hour or so. There will then be a question and answer period with some questions from me, ideally as many questions as possible from the audience. Please put them either in the chat or the Q&A button at the bottom of the zoom session, or email me at Randall@nas.org or contact@nas.org. So we will try to get as many questions as possible for a wonderful back and forth with Professor Paquette. Professor Paquette?

Robert Paquette

Well, first, I'm glad to be here. And I want to thank you, David, and the National Association of Scholars for organizing this event. It's a very special day for the Alexander Hamilton Institute. In fact, we've hit the trifecta: not only is it Constitution Day, but it is the 13th birthday of the Alexander Hamilton Institute. And it's also the 90th birthday of Carl Menges, who has been one of our most important benefactors and serves on the board. So Carl, if you're in the audience, and I hope you are, happy birthday. You're a great man, and we could not have done it without you. Before I get into my discussion of slavery, I want to give you a quote that I think is appropriate for Constitution Day and has an interesting history. The quote is from a man by the name of Theodore Draper who had a very interesting intellectual trajectory from left to right. And he published this in *The New York Times*, I don't know if he could publish this quote favorably in *The New York Times* anymore. But in 1993, he published a piece called "The Constitution was Made, Not Born." And this is what he had to say.

The founders had no polls to tell them what to think, or speech writers to put it into advertising prose for them. They did not know about lobbyists and political action committees. The debaters on the Constitution had to think for themselves, and stand up for what they believed, not simply regurgitating slogans that would get them elected the next time around. They possessed an intellectual equipment, and political commitment that puts their contemporary successors in Congress or the executive branch to shame. The men who took part in the making of the Constitution knew that they were present at an exceptional moment of creation, which called on them to give it their most serious and responsible thought and action. If ever the term best and brightest, was appropriate to describe the nation's leaders. It was then.

It's a quote that the AHI believes in and that I

believe in, and I think it accurately captures what happened in 1776 and 1787.

All right, what am I going to do today? Basically, my comments are going to provide a larger context for understanding the history of slavery. I'm also going to try to provide some workable definitions, which may help us clear up some of the terminological and conceptual muddle that I think the 1619 Project has helped perpetrate. And then I will end my discussion with a few comments about the 1619 Project. So here we go first with discussing the larger historical context.

In a polemical response to Edmund Burke's great book *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Thomas Paine declared that it was an unspeakable violation of the natural rights of man that one person should be owned as the property of another. In the antebellum United States, abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison seized on the point and banged it like a sledgehammer as part of a broadening indictment of the antebellum South and its slaveholding planters. Looking around the globe for most of human history, eyes less partisan than Garrison's and less rationalist than Paine's, but more particularist and historical like Burke's, might well have concluded, however, that the condition most natural to man was dependency, not personal freedom. Throughout much of history, on every habitable continent, to be human meant to be dependent on the will of others. Contrary to the abolitionists, human beings have owned other human beings long before positive law emerged to regulate the practice. Hence, Burke was thoroughly justified in glorying in a discrete tradition that had yielded the precious liberties, and I emphasize the plural, of Englishmen.

In medieval England, slavery had proved to be widespread. Slaves in some counties numbered perhaps 20% of the total population. After the

Norman Conquest, however, slavery declined for reasons that remain fuzzy. Yet serfdom and other extreme forms of bondage survived, even as the common law frowned on slavery. Early modern English thinkers had difficulties in drawing precise distinctions between various forms of extreme dependency, in reconciling ideals with practice, in justifying who, and under what conditions, others become suitable for enslavement. In short, because of their love of English liberties they had trouble crossing a perceptual threshold already crossed generations before by the Spanish and the Portuguese.

Cultures in history and around the world today have never agreed on the meaning of ownership. Property shared the same root as proper. It applied to established social orders and implied legally enforceable claims between persons with respect to things. Property takes different forms. Things can be owned by states, by corporations, and by individuals. John Locke, arguably the last major Western European thinker to justify slavery, declared in the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, 1669 that masters had “absolute power and authority” over their slaves. Indeed, in the *Second Treatise*, Locke noted under the category of servants a peculiar one called slaves, who by “the right of nature, are subjected to the absolute dominion and arbitrary power of their masters.” Locke never denied, however, that a civil society could regulate by positive law that which existed in the state of nature, where, as Thomas Hobbes stated, “the natural rights of every man to everything endureth.” Thus, because of mine-and-thine questions, every society in history had to enter into deliberations about the nature of what is just, and how to construct rules of law to affect demarcations perceived to be just.

Accordingly, all premodern lawgivers sought to manage the problem of private violence. They

bestowed property in the form of privileges on certain groups to aid them in that task. Resulting status-laden hierarchies influenced how rulers rendered and restored to each person that which was properly his own. With servility and dependence prominent in every human community, ownership of human beings entailed dominion exercised by one person to greater or lesser degrees over another. If authority was validated, a person’s bundled claims, legally enforceable claims, which included the right to exclude others from the use of the property—to also alienate it, rent it, or configure it virtually at will—then the form of property, including human property, merited the adjective private. When one enslaves another, it implies not merely the ownership of human beings, but the private ownership of human beings. Regulation implies that the state has withdrawn from the private owner certain sticks in the bundle of property rights—legally enforceable claims—that conferred degrees of dominion. Labor, of course, is a crucial factor of production. The value of owning labor privately helps explain why slavery has existed in a variety of historical contexts. In some cases, slavery underpinned civilizations. In others it survived at or near the margin of society, one labor form among many. The oldest religious texts, the Talmud, the Bible, the Quran, reference slavery. Indeed, all the world’s great religions, I repeat, *all* the world’s great religions, gave the institution at one time or another authoritative approval. The Quakers have pride of place as the world’s first religious denomination to come out systematically against slavery, to say that enslavement was a condition wrong for anyone, anywhere. Slavery had appeared natural to man because violence appeared natural to man. Here’s Voltaire: “All animals are perpetually at war,” Voltaire said, “every species is born to devour another.” War served as history’s most outstanding means of mass enslavement. Reflections on the nature of war help direct the intellectual and legal scaffolding that surrounded and supported slavery’s

institutionalization.

In no way, *in no way*, from a global perspective, did the Old South's peculiar institution look peculiar in the sense of being uncommon. Indeed, one of the striking facts about slavery in world history is not its peculiarity, in the sense of being uncommon, but its ubiquitousness. The far more recent, far more peculiar institution is free or wage labor, where labor is left to contract and consent. Please take my word on this: Columbus did not bring slavery to the Americas. Period. In subjugating others by violence into extreme forms of bondage, peoples in Africa and the Americas needed no instruction from the French, the Spanish, the English, or other Western Europeans. Slave trades of striking magnitude had preceded Columbus in the Mediterranean Sea, in the Indian Ocean, and within Africa itself. In 1492, Africa probably had more slaves than any other continent. From the time of Muhammad to the 20th century, Sub-Saharan Africa channeled millions of slaves into the Islamic world. Evidence of slavery in pre-Columbian society abounds, not only in the densely populated urban centers located in the Andean Highlands in central Mexico, but in many smaller chiefdoms throughout the Americas as well. The largest slave rebellion in history, from the time of Spartacus to that of the Haitian Revolution, broke out in the ninth century AD near what is today southern Iraq. Thousands and thousands of Zanj, a pejorative word I might add, slaves of East African origin who had been imported into the area and were laboring in agricultural projects, erupted and created a state that lasted fourteen years against the best efforts of the Abbasid Caliphate to crush it. Although Columbus ventured at least once to West Africa before 1492, the African slave trade held no vital interest to him. Whatever the net balance of his demonstrable sins, when weighed against his remarkable achievements, his enterprise to the Indies expanded the world and brought four continents together into sustained

contact. Over time, out of the endless groping of those who followed him with their hit and miss initiatives of knowledge gained by stumbling and bumbling around in the dark of uncharted places, emerged the design of an orderly system of transatlantic commerce. Its tradeoffs brought enormous and undeniable benefits to the world's peoples, along with immense human suffering. Who won and who lost, however, defies any simple calculus. For most of the four-century history of the Atlantic slave trade, European slave traders confined themselves to coastal trading posts located on the shoreline in seven major slave trading zones. And let me add, they didn't really move off the coast until the late 19th century. They stayed on the coast because of epidemic disease, and because also, in Africa, there were some very powerful states and empires with which they had to contend. Traders depended on African suppliers, and despite preferences for certain ethnic groups over others, generally purchased what was supplied to them. Captains preferred one stop shopping: load quickly, and get the hell out of an environment that was quite deadly to white crewman. West Central Africa, the zone that produced colonial Jamestown's first servants or slaves, furnished more slaves for transport to the Americas than any other zone during the 16th, the 17th, the 18th, and the 19th centuries.

Very easy to remember. For all those centuries, the number one trading zone was West Central Africa.

According to the prime mover of the 1619 Project, "A Portuguese slave ship had forcibly taken" the slaves who ended up in Jamestown "from what is now the country of Angola." Now let us be correct here. A slave ship did not steal. Traders purchased from other traders captives most likely taken as prisoners as a result of an internal war. In 1619, there was a hell of an internal war going on in West Central Africa. It pitted [the kingdom of] Kongos, a ferocious cannibal-

istic warrior group known as the Imbangala, some dissident Ndongo nobles, and the Portuguese, together against the kingdom of Ndongo.

In 1776, Great Britain had twenty six colonies in the Americas, thirteen on the North American mainland. Although the common law of England frowned on slavery, all twenty six of Britain's American colonies permitted legal slavery. When the thirteen rebellious colonies severed their ties with Great Britain, they did so with heads of households who numbered among the freest and most prosperous people on the planet. They revolted not against an existing tyranny, but against an apprehended one. Most did not believe in abstract equality, but rather equality before God and equality under the law. They valued the rights of Englishman and rooted their capacity to defend those rights in the freehold, that is, the private ownership of land, and in their representative bodies, which were edging towards sovereignty and had a property requirement for entrance. The founders knew enough about the outside world to recognize how easily a group, class, race, or nation could slide into political servility if not chattel slavery. The founders of this country could take great pride in their accomplishments precisely because they knew that most of the inhabitants of the world lived in abject misery in one form of servility or another. If someone had pulled aside a representative common person on any continent, in 1776, and asked, "What do you think about slavery?" the respondent might well have retorted in his native tongue, after reflection on his own dependent condition, "Slavery? It has existed, and always will exist."

Although more than thirty of the fifty-five framers of the Constitution owned slaves, most hoped the institution would wither on the vine. They saw slavery not as a positive good, but as a temporary expedient or a necessary evil. Exactly how emancipation would occur they could not precisely say. But

most agreed it needed to end gradually, and that the matter would be left largely to the decision-making of sovereign states. Widespread sentiment existed, North and South, that the Atlantic slave trade to the United States had to end. Most states of the United States had moved to end it before 1808, the year when the Constitution under Article One, Section Nine permitted federal legislation against it. And it's very important to underscore that Article One Section Nine did not ban the slave trade, the Atlantic slave trade in 1808. In fact, it put a ban on a ban until 1808, that is to say, that they could think about banning it in 1808. And it's a credit to President Thomas Jefferson, an anti-slavery slaveowner, that he moved expeditiously to end the Atlantic slave trade with the help of friends in Congress at the earliest possible date. His administration and his allies in Congress wasted no time in acting to prohibit the external slave trade as quickly as they could. And few—now underscore this—contraband slaves arrived in the United States after 1808. And we have substantial quantitative and qualitative evidence to point that out. None of the first thirteen states in the United States, according to the federal census in 1790, had a majority of slaves within their boundaries. The census counted no slaves in Massachusetts. New York with 20,000 slaves or so, had more slaves than all the other northern states combined, amounting to 6% of the state's total population. The proportion of slaves in the six southern states ranged from a low of 15% in Delaware, to a high of 43% in South Carolina. Unlike colonial Caribbean sugar colonies, no southern state ever counted slaves as a super majority in the total population, although to be sure, high slave densities could be found in certain sub regions, like lowcountry South Carolina, or lower Louisiana.

A useful—and I bring this up because Peter Coclanis has mentioned this and I want to bring some clarity to an important point he made yesterday—a useful if

grayish analytical line can be drawn between *societies with slaves* and *slave societies*. In history, the former far outnumbered the latter. In 1776, Massachusetts was a society with very few slaves. South Carolina was a slave society. Drawing the line hinges not on a proportional threshold, however suggestive that might be, but on what roles slaves filled, and what functions they performed. Whether, for example, those who enjoyed high status and predominant power in the society derived them from their ownership of slaves. The Ming Dynasty might have ruled as a slave society because its rulers were undergirded by tens of thousands of eunuchs, all slaves. The Ottoman Empire might qualify because the spearhead of its armies were the Janissaries, slave soldiers derived from tribute paid in male children extracted from Christian households in the Balkans. In 1776, the United States consisted of seven northern societies with slaves, and six southern slave societies.

More than 10 million enslaved Africans arrived in the Western Hemisphere during the entire four century history of the Atlantic slave trade. Their legal enslavement extended from Canada to Cape Horn. Imports peaked at about 100,000 annually when Saint-Domingue, a French colony now known as Haiti, was reaching its height as a plantation colony in the third quarter of the 18th century. I might interject here that Saint-Domingue, or what is today Haiti, in 1790 had more slaves than Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina combined. Not until near the midpoint of the 19th century did the total number of European migrants to the Americas exceed the total number of imported African slaves. Today, because of the monumental work of a team of scholars led by David Eltis, an old friend of mine and former graduate school colleague, historians—now listen to this—now know more about the quantitative history of the Atlantic slave trade than they know about the quantitative history of European migration to the Americas. By the way, this information is readily

available in a database that is easily accessible online. If you want to look at it just Google in these words, “slave voyages,” and you will be taken there, and it’s wonderful to play around with.

The majority of African slaves ended up on highly commercialized units of agriculture in Brazil and in the Caribbean, producing commodities for export. Less than four percent (I underscore this) *less than four percent* of the 10 million imports disembarked in the United States or in the colonies that became the United States. More than ten percent landed in the French Caribbean. More than forty-six percent, almost half of all the African slaves imported into the Americas, landed in Brazil. The tiny island of Barbados, easternmost island in the Caribbean, imported more slaves directly from Africa than did the United States or what eventually became the United States. Cuba imported more enslaved Africans in a fifty-year period from 1800 to 1850 than did the United States during its entire colonial and national history. The French colony of Saint-Domingue, present day Haiti, imported more slaves in one year, they imported 40,000 in 1790, than did Louisiana in its entire history under French, Spanish, and United States rule.

The importation of millions of Africans into Western European colonies in the Americas engendered ambiguities that legal formulations attempted to clarify. Overall, slave codes, I underscore *codes*, a marker of a slave society, expressed similar concerns, but a host of particular differences. Authorities looked to set standards for masters in their treatment of slaves, as well as to regulate slave behavior. The prescriptive wisdom derived from the experience of masters and slaves living and working together informed those slave codes. The driving force behind slave codes might come from the bottom up, from the slaveholders themselves who crafted the law, or it could come from the top down, with non-slave

holding metropolitan officials enacting law from afar, out of enlightened self-interest, to secure valuable colonies against the disruptive effect of masters abusing their dominion over slaves. Whether authorities were willing to enforce a slave code, or only certain provisions of it, remains an open question throughout the history of slavery in the Americas. No serious student of the history of slavery, however, would think to gauge the treatment of slaves and the status of race relations in any American slave society by equating the letter of the law to its enforcement.

Informal social practice, embedded as custom and habit, often trumped existing regulations when they were not preparing the way for new or additional legislation. Wherever slavery existed, masters wielded much of their considerable power over their slaves well beyond the cognizance of the state. Plato had imagined a perfect slave, one who was a mere extension of his master's will. Aristotle famously described slaves as living tools, living tools, but no master who ever lived, whatever the boundaries of his imagination, could reduce the will of his slave to nothingness, to turn him or her into Plato's ideal of absolute obedience, without destroying the desired object of his mastery. At ground level, history affords plentiful examples of slaves acting on their own, naked will to naked will, to counter the master's force. More typically, a dynamic of resistance and accommodation played out within a complex of ever changing circumstances. And this dynamic inhered in the relation and over time qualified the terms of bondage. Masters with the pride and dominion and the monopoly of force on their side had to settle for the possible: their slaves' acceptable performance, rather than the will-o'-the-wisp of absolute dominion. Nor could any master or class of masters translate their power over slaves into authority, to elicit the desired behavior by habit rather than force, without the recognition in slaves of an independent will

capable of giving consent. On this point, Michael Oakeshott, one of the 20th century's most important political philosophers, has left us some timeless wisdom that applies to more than the master-slave relation, but to other relations as well. And here it is, and I quote:

To bind another's self to one's desires, calls for exceptional skill. Force or peremptory command may in some circumstances suffice to convert another self to my purposes, but this will rarely be the most certain or the most economical manner of achieving my ends. It will more often happen that failure is avoided only by an acknowledgment of the subjectivity of the other self, which involves taking into alliance what refuses to be treated as a slave, that is, by offering a *quid pro quo*, which is itself a recognition of subjectivity.

Contra the 1619 Project, Southern slaveholders in general did not deny their slaves' humanity. Indeed, Southern theologians, strictly interpreting their Bibles, denounced attempts by outside racist pseudo-scientists to redefine the one creation into two or more. A wide variety of influences shaped the lives of slaves throughout the Americas. The cultivation of some crops proved far more exacting than others. On the scale of less taxing to most, cotton cultivation stood out at one end of the spectrum and sugarcane cultivation at the other. Only one sub-region in the United States, lower Louisiana, produced a significant amount of sugar. Whereas plantations with hundreds of slaves proved common in places like Cuba, Brazil, and Jamaica, the typical slave holding unit in the southern United States held ten slaves or less. Only a minority of adult white males in the United States owned slaves. In the South, that percentage had shrunk from about one third in 1850, to about one quarter in 1860. In 1830, more than 3,600 free persons of color in the southern United States owned slaves. In fact, I might even

point out that the largest slave uprising in the history of the United States, in 1811 in the territory of Orleans, was put down to a great extent with the help of propertied, slaveholding free persons of color, a story that you will not see told in the 1619 Project.

Planter absenteeism plagued slaveholding states in the Caribbean. Masters in the southern United States tended to reside near where they planted. Unlike Brazil, or Cuba in 1850, the southern United States had an overwhelmingly Creole, that is, native born, population. Sex ratios of slaves in southern states tended towards equality. In the southern United States, slaves had a rate of natural increase unmatched by any major slave society in history. To say, as the 1619 Project does, that the thirteen colonies, “struggled under a brutal system of slavery, unlike anything that had existed in the world before,” is demonstrable nonsense, given what we know about the history of servile populations, such as Russian serfs, Chinese peasants, medieval thralls, and Caribbean slaves. Although, and this is important, get this, although Brazil imported almost 5 million African slaves, by 1860, its total population fell short of that in the United States, which had imported fewer than 400,000. Surely, the ability of a population to grow and multiply naturally has to factor into questions of humane treatment.

In discussing the history of slavery in the United States, *The New York Times* 1619 Project implies that it is disclosing vital information that either has been hidden from the public or not given due weight by the educational establishment. To understand the outlandishness of such a claim, please understand that the last half-century has witnessed nothing less than an avalanche of scholarship on slavery. Its study has spread out to include analyses big and small, from almost every conceivable perspective, which overlap with every humanistic and social scientific discipline. The study of slavery has served as a

cutting edge to examine major questions within disciplines, and as a creative way to re-examine transcendent questions about the human condition itself.

The *Times* launched the 1619 Project in a special 100-page section of the Sunday magazine little more than a year ago. Nikole Hannah-Jones, the project’s prime mover, pronounced the goal of this multi-stage enterprise as nothing less than exposing what she calls the hypocrisy of the American founding and the shameful of all American history. Whether *The New York Times* ever intended to have a serious conversation about the history of race and slavery in the formation of our great experiment in republican government remains open to doubt. Indeed, when the 1619 Project arrived, it came replete with the announcement that a well-heeled nonprofit called the Pulitzer Center, with access to millions of dollars, an organization that, “supports journalists, stories, and workplaces that represent and illuminate diversity and inclusion in all its forms,” had already entered into a partnership with *The New York Times*, to insinuate the 1619 Project into American school systems. Before publication, the 1619 Project had already embraced a grand design of distribution. The project seeks nothing less than to replace the alleged mythologies of existing narratives of American history with what Nikole Hannah-Jones calls the “grandeur,” her word, of a superior narrative, one that includes those who have supposedly been left out of the past. Don’t be fooled. The 1619 Project is not about enriching the citizenry’s understanding of the past. Rather, it is the attempted imposition on the citizenry, with the backing of powerful media and corporate allies, of a daring innovation by which American history is to be reexamined through a distorting lens of an ideology, critical race theory to be exact, to advance a troublesome political agenda.

Now what is ideology? And we must resist whenever

it is stated that we are all ideological. That is one of the most insidious generalizations that I hear in higher education these days. We are not all ideological. Far from it. And ideology does not depend on fact. It does not pursue the truth. It substitutes for the complexity of reality a prettified abridgement of it so that the naive or unknowing, once shepherded into the flock, will take a desired position on a subject they themselves have not analyzed. Indeed, the most potent ideologies are the ones that most effectively insulate themselves from criticism. Think of activist A rebuffing the undermining evidence posited by scholar B, by dismissing it as hate speech. I once asked the current president of Hamilton College, who had surfaced to pronounce loudly and publicly that his college would not tolerate hate speech, a question: Where would he draw the line, I asked him, between hate speech and critical speech? He never answered me. I guess it's like pornography, you know it when you see it.

For the 1619 Project, Ms. Hannah-Jones, the project's prime mover, recruited more than thirty contributors to the cause of historical deconstruction and reconstruction. Yet curiously, in a work that attempts to reframe the entirety of United States history, only four of thirty-four contributors to the special section of *The New York Times* qualify as professional historians. The number of journalists doubles the number of historians. The total of poets and writers of fiction exceeds that of the journalists. One result: The history presented throughout the 1619 Project smacks of undue present-mindedness, of judgments made without a deep understanding of historical context, and against standards the founders and other historical actors, given the limits of their intellectual and moral horizons could not possibly have had. One might imagine in a flight of fancy a world of absolute freedom or perfect equality. But to use utopian or impossible standards to judge people of the past is a formula not only for bad history, but

for perpetual revolution. Cicero, probably not one of the thinkers favored by the contributors to the 1619 Project, insisted that "every systematic development of any subject ought to begin with a definition, so that everyone may understand what the discussion is about." Damn good advice, I think. Unhappily, the prime movers behind the 1619 Project have paid no heed to it. In fewer than 100 pages, they have pronounced extravagantly and grandiosely about the history of slavery in the United States, yet they have done so with little regard to context, with meager and mystifying sourcing, and with an almost studied failure to define keywords and concepts.

Take for example, the 5,000 word essay, one of the longest in the compilation, by the left wing sociologist Matthew Desmond, who by the way is no expert on the history of slavery. Yesterday Peter Coelanis, by the way, did an excellent demolition of Desmond's work. But remember that Desmond wants us to understand, "the brutality of American capitalism," that it began with slaves on the plantation. Desmond speaks of a "low road" to capitalism and a "high road" to capitalism. And I guess because he was in Scotland before me, he decided that we all understood from the get-go precisely what the hell he meant by that overused and much abused word called "capitalism." There are major thinkers on the left, Karl Marx for one, and on the right, Joseph Schumpeter, who in defining capitalism would deny slave-based plantations as ground zero. Marx rooted capitalism in a particular social relation of production, that between a wage earner and his employer, not between a master and a slave. Schumpeter defined capitalism as a system in which, and here's his key word, the "non-personal means of production" was owned privately. Personal means of production would be labor. Owning labor privately is slavery. Now, some Austrian School economists would like to jettison the word capitalism itself from our vocabulary entirely, because a market economy is so messy, they

say, that it can never be called a system.

The text of the 1619 Project, peppered with no shortage of sentiment, and wild speculation in the absence of hard evidence, also contains no few errors of fact. A few of the howlers include that by 1776, the emergence of a burgeoning British abolition movement incited colonists to rise in revolution to protect their slave property. Nonsense. Or that the first decades of the 1800s witnessed the height, I repeat, the *height* of the transatlantic cotton trade. It [the cotton trade] *begins* in the early decades of the 19th century. Another mistake, the largest slave insurrection in US history “has been virtually redacted from the historical record.” Not true. In fact, I’ve actually written about it in previous articles. Or that for South Carolina’s John Calhoun, there was no Union *per se*. In the weeks and months ahead, expect a more sustained assault on the claims of the 1619 Project. Our own Peter Wood has an outstanding volume, *1620: The True Beginning of the American Republic*, coming out in November. I’ve had the pleasure of reading it in manuscript. The Alexander Hamilton Institute’s Mary Grabar has recently signed a contract with Regnery to produce a volume that centers on debunking the 1619 Project. Previously, as some of you may recall, with Regnery Dr. Grabar published the bestselling volume, *Debunking Howard Zinn: Exposing the Fake History that Turned a Generation Against America*. And as she has already noted in several published articles, the 1619 Project owes a considerable debt to Howard Zinn’s insidious *A People’s History of the United States*. Enough said. Thank you very much.

David Randall

And thank you very much. Sorry, I’m getting my video back on. Thank you that was a lovely speech. I’m going to remind people please send in questions and comments via the chat or Q&A buttons at the

bottom.

I’m going to start out with a question I’ve been repeating to a number of people, which is how to translate this into teaching. When you are teaching American history, you have to go the extra step to say here is why the context matters. But how do you translate that into high school teaching and introductory college teaching? What is the precise way you put this in? And also with the sense that a lot of people are going to come in sort of skeptical and hostile and unwilling to believe this already.

Robert Paquette

One of the difficulties is the discipline of history itself. There’s a joke that I’ve told my students in the past, one of the Einsteins of his generation, fellow still alive, he’s a physicist by the name of Edward Witten. And I always tell the story, do you know what his undergraduate major was? And people would say, well, probably physics or mathematics. No, it was history. He said he left history, and this is probably apocryphal, he left history because he found it too difficult. The problem is, in teaching history to younger minds, it is difficult to convey the complexity of history. So there are a couple things I would emphasize. One, that when you’re dealing with history, you must be absolutely sure to have a firm foundation by defining key words and concepts. Not necessarily saying that they are the be all or end all. But as Cicero pointed out, and Hobbes did the same thing, so that we know what we are talking about let’s be clear how I understand these terms. You may understand them differently, but it is a beginning, not an end. And the other thing is the context. Historians, and you’re one, David, you know, it’s a platitude, there can be no meaning without context. Well, history is a discipline, which forces you to get into the rabbit holes to gather information. And what you have to teach students is that there is a very difficult process

of patterning that information, those facts, into a meaningful pattern with explanatory power. And that's the key—explanatory power. Because what we have too often today it's just kind of a weak interpretation, let's go back in the past and find whatever we want to argue against, or whatever makes us feel good, and move it forward. That is not good history. That does not allow you to make good judgments.

You can't judge peoples of the past, as I said, in my presentation, by a moral and intellectual horizon they could not possibly have had. So when we discuss slavery, I think it's absolutely crucial that people understand that in comparative context. That it's not just slavery, but servitude was everywhere. And what makes the American Republic in many ways so distinctive is that there was this liberty. And granted, at the beginning, it attached to white male heads of households for the most part, but nowhere else on the planet did you have such a high proportion of those householders participating in the polity. Because on every continent you had rulers who lived off the servitude, the coerced labor of others. And that was taken as a given. What's new under the sun, is the belief, which we see emerging in the 18th and 19th centuries, that you did not have to explicitly coerce people to get the job you wanted done, done.

David Randall

A follow up question then on the teaching. This is actually fascinating, for both you and Peter Coclanis, the depth to which you need to know economic thought, and you are emphasizing among other things the Austrian economic school. It seems to me that to learn how to think economically is a very different skill and frame of mind from learning, thinking historically. But in fact, to understand slavery do you therefore need to know both history and economics and both modes of thought?

Robert Paquette

I think certainly it helps. But remember that the discipline of economics is relatively modern. The economic, if we trace it back to Aristotle's understanding, it referred to the management of a household, which he could not easily imagine without slaves. But obviously what has happened with our studies is that it has been broken up into disciplines and now all sorts of very fashionable programming. And one of the greatest sins of our time is the failure of liberal arts institutions, some of the very best that we have, to teach the liberal arts.

Let me give you an example of how bad this is. I dare you to find among any NESCAC [New England Small College Athletic Conference] school, the little Ivies, Amherst, Middlebury, any of them, who mandate not just for the undergraduate, but for history majors, at least a two-sequence course in American history. Think about that. We are training historians, and American history in the United States is disregarded, marginalized, and even in some cases eliminated. I don't think they have that problem studying Chinese history in China. So I think this is something we need to think about, is that one of the things about a liberal arts education, which applies to history, is that properly done it teaches us different approaches to the acquisition of knowledge. There's a mathematical understanding, a philosophical understanding, an economic understanding. To be at our best, we need to know something about all of those ways of knowing. So that's what I'm saying. So that makes it difficult. Some people think, oh, history, so easy. Let me tell you, it is not easy, if done properly. My most recent book, which I co-authored with Doug Edgerton, we spent more than a dozen years putting the information together to produce something that we think is definitive.

David Randall

I'm gonna have a somewhat differently focused question from the audience. Earlier, you spoke about the slavery in Africa. Was slavery a market in Africa? Who was selling the Africans? Other Africans, white people living in Africa? And is there any known country that didn't use slaves, ever, in their history?

Robert Paquette

Well, understand this, because the discipline of economics in many ways is a Western creation. So although we can analytically go back into Africa and see an economic system, it's often very difficult to unravel the political from the economic in what Africans were doing. Now, that said, I can say without question that the existence of Western European traders on the West African coast did incentivize the taking, the capturing of slaves, and their sale. Remember that the Atlantic slave trade is only one leg of a multi-leg process. And that included taking slaves from point of catchment back to barracoons, slave trading depots, and then waiting for the arrival of Europeans or to trade with Europeans.

But there's another point that needs to be made. There was mass enslavement going on in Africa at various times in various places that had nothing to do with the presence of Western Europeans on the coasts. Now, if they were looking for slaves, they may have benefited. But take, for example, West Central Africa. There was an historic rivalry between the kingdom of Ndongo and the kingdom of Kongo. And the Portuguese, at one time, had great difficulties in making penetrations in Angola against the king. The Portuguese suffered, at one point, a massive military defeat at the hands of the kingdom of Ndongo. So as often was the case, and Europeans are very good at this, is they played divide and rule.

They made allies. You can think of—for example, Cortez had tens of thousands of Indian allies. Otherwise he could not have conquered Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital city. In Africa, Western Europeans benefited by playing one ethnic group against the other. Understand that “African” is a word we imposed. It obfuscates a very complex reality, their different ethnic groups, their stateless societies, their kingdoms, their empires. It's an enormously complex history and to be honest with you there's much more we need to learn. I know there was a project—I think it was started at Harvard—where we're attempting to translate all sorts of Arabic sources, which would illuminate the enslavement process in Africa.

Now, were there certain places that did not enslave? Very few off the top of my head that I can think of that were of importance. And understand, even if they did not, and this was the purpose of my context, even if they did not enslave people, that did not mean they did not have within their societies extreme forms of dependency. So when you think of slavery, you've got to put it on a continuum. This was my point about the metaphor of bundled property rights. It's oftentimes tough to make an analytical distinction. How do you distinguish between serfs and slaves? Well, there are some people, if you look at Eastern European serfs, they could be bought and sold. It's virtually indistinguishable from slavery. But all those forms of servitude imply an extreme dominion. And when we look at them, we have to look, okay, in this dominion, what is the particular bundle of property rights that one owner holds over another? And that's how we try to draw these analytical distinctions. But in responding, this utopian idea that everyone lived free and equal, sorry, I don't see many of those places, from antiquity moving forward. Nor do I think that such utopian dreams are possible. I am not a utopian.

David Randall

Thank you. I have a clarification question, which I want to follow up with something of my own. Somebody asked, "Did you say Brazil imported roughly 4 million slaves and the US imported 400,000, and yet, by 1850, there were more than 4 million blacks in the United States?" And I believe that's more than in Brazil. I want to follow up on that. What was it about Brazil that made it so much more deadly?

Was it just climate? Or was there something about the slave regime itself that differed?

Robert Paquette

I think it's a complex of factors. I think you had larger units exposing slaves to epidemic disease. I think you had lower fertility, you had higher mortality. The nature of the work is different. So there is no one factor that explains this demographic differential that existed between Brazil on the one hand, and say the United States on the other. What we do know is that there was an extraordinarily high fertility rate of slaves in the United States. Robert William Fogel, the Nobel-Prize-winning economist, his great book *Without Consent or Contract*, has noted that female slaves in the United States had a longer childbearing span and had shorter intervals between births, which contributed to the higher fertility. Another factor would be the continuation of the Atlantic slave trade, which distorted the demographic pyramid, distorted sex ratios. I know from my early work on Cuba, there were estates, sugar plantations in Cuba, which had more than 500 slaves, not one of which was a female. Now, it's pretty hard to reproduce naturally that way. So how those populations did grow, if they did, was by continued imports from Africa. And so you're absolutely right. This is one of the great ironies or the great paradoxes of the history of slavery in the Americas, that the United States, or what became the United States, was a relatively minor importer of African slaves, yet by 1860, probably had a larger

population of slaves than did Brazil, which imported almost half of the total of ten plus million that arrived in the Americas.

And I might add that those two places may not have had the most slaves in the world at that time. There was a caliphate in the Sudan known as Sokoto Caliphate, which may have had more than 4 million slaves in 1860. So again, you rightly point to an important demographic paradox, and it's one that's still being looked at. But interestingly enough, even the scholars relied on by the 1619 Project, if you look at their work, like Michael Tadman who is cited with respect to sugar and the internal slave trade. Michael Tadman, in a very important essay he wrote in the *American Historical Review*, underscored this extraordinarily high rate of natural increase enjoyed by slaves. Now where whites in the U.S. and slaves in the U.S. differed was in infant mortality. That's important. And the best work on that subject has been done by a student of Robert William Fogel, an Ohio State professor named Richard Steckel. And so they had the higher infant mortality, higher child mortality, but about age seven, from age seven on, the life expectancy is pretty close between whites and blacks in the old South. In the case of Brazil, look, there is no question, my first book, which gives you an idea why Cuba and Brazil may have had a different demographic experience, was entitled *Sugar is Made with Blood*. And it comes from a saying, in Cuba, *con sangre se hace azucar*. Sugar is made with blood. And it speaks to the rigors of sugar cultivation, in particular. And a Cuban scholar by the name of Fernando Ortiz said it takes two things to cultivate sugar cane, brute strength and breathless haste. And wherever you see sugar plantations in America, you will see, because of the brute strength, disproportionate numbers of males. In the U.S., which helped in reproduction, you find sex ratios of slaves tending towards equality in most places. Interestingly enough, one of the notable exceptions of equality of sex ratios was in the

sugar plantation zone in lower Louisiana.

David Randall

A follow up to that. Did any Western Hemisphere slave society have a better demographic result for slaves than the U.S., and related to that, who was second after the United States?

Robert Paquette

This is where the distinction between societies with slaves and slave societies comes in. Notice that I was careful to mention slave societies. There are also societies with slaves, and I think there are some statistics available, for example, the Bahamas, where we can see a rate of natural increase that is comparable to yes, to the United States. So when I make the generalization throughout time, I make it with reference to major slave societies.

David Randall

So of those you'd say the United States has the highest ratio of natural increase.

Robert Paquette

Yes, and this, some people might want to know, is W.E.B. DuBois, great thinker, did his dissertation on the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade and posited, because he noticed this rate of natural increase, an extraordinary illegal slave trade to the United States after 1808. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence does not support it [DuBois's hypothesis]. One figure that's now actually deemed high by many scholars is that at most 50,000 slaves arrived illegally in the United States between 1810 and 1860. What's the quantitative evidence? Because the Atlantic slave trade brought far more males than females, had there been an extensive contraband

slave trade to the United States, it would have shown up in the census data in the sex ratios of slaves. It does not. As I said, I see a kind of a leveling, or equalization of those sex ratios. And then if you might imagine, because of the abolitionist movement, there were all sorts of people heading south, trying to find evidence of illegal imports. And there would be distinctive tattooing and scarring patterns that would become immediately visible on illegally imported slaves from Africa, if there had been large numbers, and that qualitative evidence does not exist. There's a little, but not much.

David Randall

Thank you. I have some questions about critical race theory and its effect on being able to have any debate at all. You presumably, we presumably, started out having to argue against a certain political correctness, political skew, back in the 80s, which I think has become worse with the introduction of critical race theory. Can you comment? About how much more difficult has it become to even have these conversations when you're having them with people who now buy into critical race theory, standpoint epistemology, and so forth?

Robert Paquette

Well, I remember when critical race theory was posited by people like Derrick Bell at Harvard, who was very controversial then, did not get tenure at Harvard, but then went elsewhere. Remember that Derrick Bell was very influential on Barack Obama, that critical race theory was seen as quite exotic, marginal, heavily criticized. And what we need to do as good thinkers is how do we explain how rapidly critical race theory has taken over certain sectors not only of the academy, but administrations, in corporate boardrooms, etc? Especially since it's indisputable, in my view, that critical race theory is an ideology. Race

is important, no one denies it. And there's been an avalanche of books written about it. But understand that race and racism doesn't explain everything. And to this, I would go back to my definitions. Race is a word with a very long history but evolving meanings. Race could mean just simply a group, type, kind, or class. Race in the early modern period tended to refer to genealogy, a group of people that had a common ancestor, which is important to know because one of the crucial preconditions of modern racism was so called purity-of-the-blood concepts in Europe, which are related to genealogy. Now, what's interesting is the historically specific creation of a modern notion of race, which is a race is a group that defines itself or is defined by others according to certain outward physical characteristics, which are regarded as innate or immutable, and to which moral and intellectual criteria are attached.

Now, that's something new under the sun. Why did it come about? There I think we have to explore the growth of enlightenment rationalism, the attempt to categorize human beings and to apply reason to the understanding of difference under a certain set of conditions. I might tell you, and this is from my own work, what's interesting is that in many colonies, I'm thinking of Saint-Domingue, which became Haiti, there were certain areas early on, in 1685, the first French slave code allowed marriages between white and black. Okay, 1685. And in Saint-Domingue, particularly in the south province, you had a very large class of mulattos, mulatto slaveholders, who came about as a result of a time when relations between what we now call races were much easier and more fluid. Sometimes those relations, organically grown, are very favorable to interactions. It's when the state intervenes and passes certain kinds of legislation that things become worse. And if you look at certain slave codes and what they demanded in Louisiana, which imposed a variant of the 1685 code, in 1724, they abolished that earlier provision, which allowed marriages

between white and black. So, again, it's complex.

In one way, I would say sometimes let these things—I've counseled the administration—instead of this vast bureaucracy, called the diversity cartel, let black and white students talk these things out on their own, because oftentimes it's resolved. That's organic, getting to know the people who have these views and understanding them better with chats, not with people forcing or imposing views, is a better way to go. I'm a big believer in let's discuss, come into my office. I think I was renowned when I taught at Hamilton College for the amount of time I gave students, whatever they need. And sometimes when these troublesome topics came up, if they couldn't get the words out in class, let's go into the office, let's deal with it, and we'll bring it back up the next day in class, and we'll talk this out as a class. It is, without question, much more difficult today than ever to speak honestly, to try to speak with historical knowledge. Because the ideology, as I said, the thing that's so damning about critical race theory, is it has built in the thickest insulation that I've ever seen, to protect itself from criticism. And then what's that? Well, you're speaking from a standpoint of white privilege. Those kinds of assertions are racist unto themselves, that because you look at my phenotype and say that I'm white, I have nothing possibly of interest to say. Well, if that's the case, how can anybody who's of African descent speak on any question pertaining to whites? I mean, you're back to those kinds of back and forth, which I thought we had surmounted decades ago. But alas, not so. So look, what we need are good people of all colors to come together, learn more, pontificate less, and one way we do this is through good history. Not the 1619 Project, which is hardly that.

David Randall

We're at 12:15 or so and that's a wonderful way to end this session. I want to give you some last words, but

I just want to say to the audience, we will be having our next panel at 2:00 pm. That's American ideals, moderated by Thomas Lindsey with Kevin R.Z. Gutzman, Jason Ross, and Joseph Fornieri speaking. So please, everybody tune in again in only a few hours. But Professor Paquette, do you have any last words you want to give to the audience?

Robert Paquette

Well, listen, I want people to be sure to buy Peter Wood's book, forthcoming book, *The 1620 Project*, because it's outstanding. And you asked for ammunition against critical race theory and the 1619 Project—that provides it in abundance. And Peter has done a very good job in not only analysis, but in writing this up. It's a very good read.

David Randall

Thank you. Thank you so much. And thanks on behalf of Peter. Thank you. I'm going to close the discussion now. Thank you again so much for taking part.

Robert Paquette

Okay, glad to be here. Have a good day, everybody.

Slavery and Liberation: Defying the Power of Legree's Ghosts

William B. Allen

Peter Wood

Good afternoon and welcome back to the final session of the National Association of Scholars' conference in conjunction with the Texas Public Policy Foundation's efforts to elevate the discussion over the 1619 Project and some of the discontents of our time that are taking the form of what I think of as pseudo-scholarship.

It's my very great pleasure this afternoon to introduce William B. Allen. He is a lifetime member of the National Association of Scholars, known for many other things. He is a biographer of President Washington. He has written on the works of Montesquieu, on the Federalist and the anti-Federalist Papers. He has done interesting work on Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Rethinking Uncle Tom* is the title of one of his books, which touches on his topic today. Professor Allen is a professor emeritus of political philosophy at Michigan State University. He's been hanging out most recently, I believe, as the visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Western Civilization at the University of Colorado. His academic pursuits and his academic career with a bachelor's degree from Pepperdine University, and a master's and PhD from Claremont Graduate School. He was early in his academic career a professor at Harvey Mudd College. He's been a member of the National Council of the Humanities. He served on and chaired the U.S. Civil Rights Commission for a couple of years. Executive Director of the State Counsel on Higher Education in Virginia. The list of awards is quite long. The areas of interest that he brings to today's discussion are American government, jurisprudence, liberal education, precisely the things we're talking about. The title of his remarks today are "Slavery and Liberation: Defying the Power of Legree's Ghosts." It is therefore with the greatest of pleasure that I welcome Professor Allen.

William Allen

Thank you very much, Dr. Wood, and greetings to all out there in virtual land. I'm happy to be able to spend these few moments with you talking about such an important theme. A theme whose importance was dramatically underscored just yesterday, as President Trump celebrated Constitution Day by inaugurating a 1776 Commission. A commission which will doubtless do very fine work in recovering, as we might say, from the shock of the 1619 Project. And if you want to know what it would take to recover from that shock, I can recommend nothing to you more strenuously than I would recommend Dr. Wood's new book. It does an incredible job of setting forth for us the whole comprehensive picture of what the implications of that work are. As I read through that manuscript, I was almost overcome with the thoroughness of the job that he has performed, while all the time not at all pretending to set forth in a specialized way the kind of analytical criticism, which we expect from our historians of the period, but rather, forcing us to see the full cultural implications of this movement. And that's in a sense, what I want to talk about with you today.

I want to bring to you some reflections precisely on this question of what's at stake in the wreckage, and I use the word quite deliberately, of the 1619 Project. Perhaps some of you will certainly remember the scene in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," where Cassy secretes herself in the attic of Simon Legree's home. There, hidden from his view, and manipulating some of the cracks in the wall and opening and closing windows and doors, creating that ghostly, eerie atmosphere that serves ultimately to terrify Legree, she used the specter of ghosts for his superstitious mind to create an unhospitable environment there in his dwelling place, which will ultimately provide for her the opportunity to flee from tyranny. That is, from slavery into liberty. So, creating for Legree the fear of ghosts was Cassy's way of escaping that dwelling. By

contrast, what we can observe in the 1619 Project, and indeed, in critical race theory all together, is a similar creation of ghosts, creating ghosts that center around the whole question of the settlement and founding of the United States, and using that context to blast chill winds through the entire cultural, social, and political structure, sufficient to terrorize, presumably, those of us who dwell in this nation into a kind of impotent quiescence in the face of the decay around us. Now, they do this, unlike Cassy, not because they intend to flee from tyranny into liberty, but because they intend to flee from liberty into tyranny, into slavery. And so I have proposed for our theme today precisely to talk about what this means, this slavery versus liberation. What is it that we're bargaining for it? And perhaps the best context for me to present it for you is that which derives from the statement Abraham Lincoln made in 1864, which I will presently share with you.

But before I do that, let me say this much. The question of the day, we might say, is the question of systemic racism. The chill winds that are meant to blast through the timbers of our national edifice are precisely the chill winds carried by that expression, systemic racism: root and branch racism, infectious racism, metastasized racism, so thoroughly characterizing the culture and society of the United States that it is to be recognized as irredeemable. And of course, to the extent that it is recognized as irredeemable, then it must be abandoned. Now, the abandonment is not the kind of abandonment that we know from history and that was exercised, experienced by those who settled North America. They too fled from tyranny to liberty, in the model of Cassy, which meant of course, they were prepared to undertake enormous risk, enormous dangers, but all with a confident resolve and self-determination that they could govern themselves. When they formulated, for example, the Mayflower Compact, they did so in quite conscious realization of the burden they were

taking on their shoulders, namely, the burden to ponder exactly what the power of self-government might be. There were no more than what we would call seeds of liberty planted at that settlement, not liberty itself—but certainly, liberty from which people expected roots to be set deep into the soil, I might even say the soul, of this North American geospace. And those seeds of liberty were compelling to them. They were a sufficient glimpse of a better future, a sufficient glimpse of the fruit of freedom subsequently to be harvested, to drive them across a trackless ocean into forested wildernesses on what were otherwise barren shores, from their perspective. And they were willing to do that, they were willing to risk all that, in order to attain the leverage, the power, the inspiration, of liberty.

And of course, that is the human story, is it not? Are we not familiar with it? From the stories of Egypt, and the Exodus, all the way up to the story of Cassy, and all the true historical examples of people who fled oppression and want. Certainly, you might say, nothing beyond the experience of ending slavery characterizes dramatically the story of the United States so much as the flight of immigrants from around the world onto these promising shores. And so when you think about it that way, you acquire immediately a means of measuring the impact of an initiative such as the 1619 Project, which aims to undercut and destroy that entire story. It is as if to say, not only will there be no fruit to be harvested, but the very roots are going to be pulled up. And that is what systemic racism means. It means root and branch racism. It is a cancer that cannot be cured with mere chemo, but must be removed surgically, in order to restore or even to invent health, since in this case, it would take a great deal of invention to discover at all what notion of health drives this particular initiative. It's easy to see that the notion of health can't be predicated upon self-government, for its entire tendency is rather to drive the society toward

structures of dependence and domination, and therefore, ultimately tyranny. And we must bear in mind that slavery in the United States, black slavery in the United States, was not so thorough a tyranny, as the tyranny of totalitarianism for the simple reason that it was, we might say, contained within a larger cultural, social, political sphere, in which the seeds of freedom had been firmly planted. Slavery in the United States was always shrouded and shadowed by the threat of freedom, a threat ultimately realized, of course, in the abolition of slavery itself. But to see that, you've got to be able to see the promise from the founding. It is not necessary to say that every single American that ever lived was dedicated to abolition. But it is certainly false to make the argument that Americans powerfully moved by principles of liberty and self-government did what they did for the sake of the defense of slavery. And therefore what weighs in the balance in the current national debate is whether those who acted in the name of freedom, in the name of self-government, prevailed more powerfully than any who might have acted in the name of slavery.

Now, I'm being generous when I speak that way, and being generous to Hannah-Jones and *The New York Times*' 1619 Project, whose allegations about the motives of the founders are so baseless as to have been shot through completely by numerous others in the profession who have already pointed out the systematic errors. The most significant of which, of course, is the attribution to the Dunmore Initiative, relative to the slaves during the war of the revolution, which of course, only occurred fully a decade into the development of that revolutionary spirit. Already ten years earlier, you had George Washington, communicating very privately, but in another sense very openly, a complete resolve to face death rather than the threat of tyranny from Great Britain, without any reference to anything like Dunmore or any threats to slavery. We know that there are many of those who participated in the founding whose motives were not

merely pure with respect to this question, but who knowingly understood the implications. It is pointed out over and over again in the documentary record, that there were deliberations for example, in the legislature in New Jersey, the assembly there, in which people deliberately and explicitly invoked the implication of all men are created equal in reference to the existence of slavery. They were aware of the tensions between those states in the emerging United States predicated upon freedom and those predicated upon slavery. Even as late as 1792, James Madison, coming from the slave state of Virginia, is able to pen an essay in which he describes Virginia as an aristocratic society precisely because of the presence of slavery in it, rather than a free society or a democratic society. But then he goes on to make the observation that it becomes more democratic in proportion to its integration in the larger United States, where the weight of freedom prevails. Now, there's a formula for you, you see. What Madison was saying is, look, the seeds of freedom planted here will prevail over the trail of slavery, already established here. Not immediately, perhaps. Not even so strongly as to lead Madison himself to liberate his slaves, but strongly enough to set in motion those cultural, those social, and yes, those moral and religious dynamics, which would ultimately reclaim the promise of liberty in the war with slavery.

But first understand that we need a practical application it seems to me. That's why I want you to be able to contemplate for a moment, the way in which Abraham Lincoln approached this particular issue. And so I'm going to ask you to look with me at what Lincoln had to say, except I'm trying to share my screen and I can't tell if I am, and I would ask the host to intervene and let me know whether in fact it's shared or did I do something wrong?

Chance Layton

Yes, it is sharing.

William Allen

Wonderful, thank you so much. Then I will continue.

So what we have here is the letter that Lincoln wrote in 1864 to the editor of the Frankfort Kentucky Commonwealth, who is understood by Lincoln to be a southern man. And certainly he is technically from a southern state, if not a state in rebellion. But this man asked him to state in writing, what presumably he had said only verbally in an interview there at Washington, DC, to the governor and senator from the state. And so he writes it out for him and quotes him. But there's a context with this that is important to remember also. He recently held (not so recently as that but reasonably enough because this is referring back to it in a way indirectly) a session at the White House with black people who were coming to visit with him, and before whom he had placed the proposition of free emigration elsewhere, to resolve the tensions and problems in our national life. And, of course, that was both reported at the time, and often abused since then, particularly in Hannah-Jones's supposed scholarship. It was seen as Lincoln expressing racism, Lincoln expressing his indisposition towards black people in general, the fact that he would dare to ask them to leave the United States. I remind you of what I said a few moments ago. What is the human history with respect to slavery or tyranny and liberty? It is the history of people having self-respect sufficient to turn their backs to tyranny, turn their backs to slavery, to confront dangers, to confront grave risk, to go without guarantees, without assurance into an open world, with the clear conviction that they could make their way. And when Lincoln posed this prospect of colonization elsewhere, or emigration without respect to the question of colonization, he is, in fact,

addressing these black citizens with that high degree of respect, which he would have held for those original settlers in North America. He was assimilating them to the same level of moral performance, the same level of conviction and righteous determination. So that rather than insulting them and being offensive, he was actually elevating the expectation, but he does this in a context. And that context is what this letter is going to force us to examine for a moment. And then I'll wrap up.

But what was that context? The context is, Lincoln was not able to say with confidence that the society, the culture in the United States would ever embrace the full integration of freed slaves. Because he knew, from the moment in 1808, that the foreign slave trade had been interdicted, had been prohibited by law, there immediately surged to the forefront the question of race. And this whole notion of assimilation, of integration, of racial joining in a single national entity, was an unanswered question. A frequently posed question, but an as yet unanswered question. And it was certainly still unanswered for Abraham Lincoln. He may, as much even as Harriet Beecher Stowe, have had a longing for what we might consider to be that rosy, optimistic picture to prevail. And there's no reason we shouldn't think that that is true of Lincoln. We know even through the marriage of his Kentucky-bred wife that there was one of the members of the family who was named after Lyman Beecher. This is Lyman Beecher Todd, Mary Todd Lincoln's relation, and therefore, cousin to Mary Todd, and in the same family. Well out of that family, somehow somebody found an inspiration to place the name of this powerful preacher, the father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, and a whole line of abolitionists, on one of their children. So, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that that influence was also present in Abraham Lincoln himself (not that he necessarily derived it from Mary Todd, but that he was closely allied with it).

So, we can dispense with all the vain speculations about Lincoln's attitude. We have enough in his own domestic context to believe his professions about what he thought on the question of slavery, even as that affects the question, ultimately, of integration. But when one thinks that it would be a good thing to bring a society together in a general assimilation it is not enough to say that one also has confidence that it can be accomplished. For the Lincoln who arrived at his professional political maturity in Illinois, illustrated through the Lincoln-Douglas debates, how sensitive he was to the deep prejudices of the society of the day. And he might have been able to imagine, as it is certainly clear that both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison imagined, that the society would never overcome those prejudices. It was clear that Alexis de Tocqueville even imagined that the society would never overcome those prejudices. It is then therefore reasonable, very reasonable indeed, to concede that he would have been hesitant to affirm with certainty that the fruits of liberty could be harvested by black people in the United States, even when he still was willing to predicate the future of the United States, upon the harvesting of the fruits of liberty by the settlers who originally settled it, and even the more recent, but more congenial from a social perspective, immigrants from Europe who became a part of it.

So this letter then enables us to begin to think through why it is one can deliberate this question of the place in the United States of black people, from a point of view, that recognizes realistically the difficulty of establishing that place, without at the same time embracing a defense of slavery, a defense of racism. And since the entire argument for systemic racism is predicated upon collapsing that distinction, and denying the possibility of seeing both sides of that picture, then what Lincoln is going to do, using the wonderful paralogisms of which he is so, so very much the proficient practitioner, we will see why it's

necessary to see both sides of that, and at the same time, see the commitment to trying to realize the best possible result of what he called, of course, at Gettysburg, the new birth of freedom.

Thus let's dive into that letter. He says:

"I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery."

Now, that's, of course, the critical passage in terms of substantial meaning. Whereas Lincoln is able to say, I believe slavery is wrong, but I do not necessarily have the power within this political context, the context of these institutions and the laws, to do anything to institute that principle as a rule. Rather, there has to be a process, a deliberate cultural process, a process of formulating public opinion, of having general deliberation, not just private opinion, that would determine the outcome of that question. And thus, what Lincoln is saying is that he had to prosecute the war constantly balancing, oscillating even if you will, between those measures, which would be in harmony with abstract principle, and those measures which would be in harmony with preserving the constitutional order, ultimately, therefore implying also the cultural and social order in the United States.

So he's asked the question, was it possible to lose the nation and yet preserve the Constitution? "And there you see underscored the response to the 1619 Project, because it wants to eliminate the life for the sake of an injured limb, from this perspective. It wants completely to destroy what has been established in the United States, in the hope, of course, of raising up some new structure. But that means starting with new seeds that put down new roots that produce different institutions, and a yet unarticulated fruit. That project would abort the living, not for the sake of the unborn but for the sake of the not yet conceived.

Lincoln is not so sanguine as all that. So, he says he's considered the measures before him in the following light. *"I felt that measures otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the nation."*

Interpretation: The first principle for the defense of liberty is the preservation of the nation established upon the seeds of liberty, where the roots have already been struck into the soil of the nation. He says, *"Right or wrong, I assume this ground and now avow it. I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the constitution, if, to save slavery, or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and Constitution all together."* So Lincoln understood that what was at stake in this entire process was always a deliberate and prudent judgment about where the greater weight of probability lay with regard to the ultimate outcome of liberty. And that meant moving back and forth between the wrongfulness of slavery and the appropriateness of the institutional structures to deal with that wrongfulness. And that was always an open question. Had the system grown too imperfect to be able to accomplish that? But remember, the level of imperfection at this point, from Lincoln's point of view, is an imperfection not of the systemic variety that the present day critics, that is to

say our time, when I speak of present day critics, would affirm. For Lincoln is now setting forth an argument that says, there is something systemic in the United States, and it is freedom. What is organic is the commitment to freedom. And the whole idea of systemic racism is precisely the antithesis of systemic freedom, as you might say, bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh. And that's the alternative. I think we say slavery is bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh, or we say freedom is bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh. Lincoln understood it to be freedom. And the 1619 Project seeks to deny precisely that.

Now, he goes on in this letter then to make clear how he approached this. He says, *"I dealt with the question of arming blacks."* I'm not going to read all this; you can read through it. You have now the general sense. And I just want to bring you to the dynamic conclusion that I'm interested in. He says:

"When I came to believe the indispensable necessity for military emancipation, and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure [voluntary emancipation and colonization], they declined the proposition; and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it, the Constitution, or of laying strong hold upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this, I was not entirely confident."

So, Lincoln, in other words, tells us he made a prudential judgment. He chose what seemed to him the likelier course, but far from a certain course, so that he could understand the potential of confrontations of the sort de Tocqueville imagined between the races. And therefore, he could see the whole military effort being fractured and disordered by the insertion of a strong presence of hundreds of thousands of black troops. But on the other hand, he could see losing the war without them. And therefore, the greater risk is the risk of losing the war.

That is what he goes on to show. So, he says:

"I gained 130,000. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no caviling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure. And now that any Union man who complains of the measure,"

and see, the point of "Union man" here is that that's where the whole test of assimilation is taking place, not in the South. The question of abolishing slavery is a straightforward question. There is also a question of integrating Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and the rest of the North—a very different question. And so,

"let any Union man who complains of the measure, test himself by writing down in one line that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms; and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be but for the measure he condemns. If he cannot face his case so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth."

But then he wants to add something, which I think is extremely important to us. He says:

"I add a word, which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale, I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God."

Now you will clearly hear there of course the echoes of the second inaugural address. And you will recognize Lincoln carrying forth that whole argu-

ment that starts from the premise that both sides pray to the same God, that the judgment rests with God, not with either side. So that Lincoln's modest, or humble presentation of his posture, relative to the demanding moral judgments of the circumstances, is precisely the kind of response to the claims made in the 1619 Project that completely blast the arguments of that project. In fact, because Hannah-Jones had specifically described Lincoln as racist in the terms that are directly addressed by Lincoln in this letter, I sent last January the copy of this letter to the editor at the *New York Times*. And I added not a single statement, I did not give any interpretive commentary. I simply said to him, since you have raised the question about this very proposition relative to Lincoln, wouldn't you consider it fair to have Lincoln speak for himself? Here's how he answered the question you have posed, will you not publish it? That's all I said. I never heard back from that editor. And that editor never published Lincoln's response.

What does that convey? What is its significance? Its significance is that the 1619 Project is not interested in the deliberations that Lincoln was engaged in. That project is not interested in trying to rehabilitate the seeds of freedom from the founding, and trying to nurture into full blossom, the tree that would have grown from those seeds, such that the promised fruit could be harvested. It is interested only in uprooting, only in destroying that originally formulated and articulated hope of freedom, forcing us therefore to ask the question, with what hopes does it replace the original hopes?

You see then, the question is not how to escape from slavery. The question is whether liberation will be at all possible, whether liberty will be at all possible. For those who reject the choice between slavery and liberty as a real moral choice around which deliberative efforts have been shaped, leading to precise historical outcomes in the political, moral, and social

struggles of the nation's life, when they reject that story of our past they're clearly rejecting that tension between liberty and slavery. And they are suggesting that even if we reject slavery as a model, the model with which they replace it is not necessarily the model of liberty, and probably not at all the model of liberty. Now, here's the way to conceive of this. As I said earlier, black slavery was a subset of American political, cultural, and social life. One can therefore talk strenuously about the evil of black slavery, without embracing the promise of liberty. It's easily enough done, if one simply universalizes slavery for the whole society. At that case, there's no longer a subset. There's no one at a specific disadvantage, other than everyone relative to the tyrant, himself or herself. And that, of course, is the promise I see being offered by critical race theory, the 1619 Project, all these invasions of the educational curriculum, all these attempts to reformulate our common understanding of who we are. It's not merely a question of isolating us as individuals, rendering us impotent and destroying a sense of agency. It's not even the question of creating social dependence on an overarching, overwhelming administrative state. It's a question of complete subjection. It is perhaps ironic, to contemplate that those who would propose such levels of subjection in the society, rather blithely imagine that they will be the people who will superintend such structures. We know of course, historically, the ways in which revolutions devour their own children. We also know something else. To concentrate the kind of power imagined by these revolutionary activities in so few hands necessarily sets up a struggle for the exercise of that power. And the likelihood that people who by such devious means as using propaganda realize that they cannot otherwise command authority or influence in the general society, probably also will not emerge as those who will exercise the power erected on those foundations.

So now we discover, they would plant seeds that will produce vegetation the likes of which they cannot themselves even foresee. And our alternative is to live in unknown forests with unknown vegetation, but perhaps, latent dangers and poisons to which we are unaccustomed and without antibody, for the known promise of freedom, or the known structures of liberty, or the known towering trees that can establish themselves so securely they can last for centuries. Just last week, I visited a home here in Maryland, and stood next to a 442 year old sycamore that was planted on property that settlers in the 17th century had established, and where they had nursed that tree into being. It is that kind of continuity from the original seeds of freedom in the United States that is at risk in the 1619 Project. If we become terrorized by the ghosts that these new tyrants seem to want to plant among us, we can expect that old sycamore to fall in the hurricane of social disorder that will follow. For, most surely, we will have fallen prey to what Lincoln called “blowing out the moral lights among us.”

David Randall

Thank you so much. This is David Randall, Director of Research at the NAS, for people just tuning in. Thank you so much for a wonderful speech. To the audience, please send in your questions.

I have a first question myself. That wonderful letter from Abraham Lincoln, I want to think about it in terms of a lesson not just for the content of what it's saying, but how he communicates to the American people—to a newspaper editor through the media—and what lessons does that letter, and Lincoln in general, give for how we should be communicating to the American people the defense of American liberties, the Constitution, history, prudence, and so on?

William Allen

That is a wonderful question, David. Thank you for it. I think what your question underscores is the point I made in a fleeting manner when I referred to Lincoln's proficiency and paralogisms. He's not an “on the one hand, on the other hand” guy. That's not what I mean by paralogism. He's someone who actually performs deliberation openly and in public. He walks one through an argument with all the elements that have to be considered before embracing a conclusion, and he shows therefore respect for the alternatives in the argument. That's what makes him the great communicator.

That's what is so plainly missing in most public rhetoric in our own time, where we see presentations of a single stream of opinions tending in one direction without any regard for alternative reflections and possibilities. Lincoln never moved that way. He always moved by thinking out loud, publicly, in front of everyone and showing that he's considering the various possibilities before settling on a determinate course of action. That's where he gained his power.

When he said, in the debates with Douglas, that Douglas was blowing out the moral lights among us (that was Lincoln's expression), partly what he meant was that by not showing the reasoning behind the argument for popular sovereignty, Douglas was dulling the capacity of the public to assess the meaning of it. And to give people the power to judge the meaning of it is critical to realizing the full value and power of self-government. Because public opinion was to be formulated not under the impress of a propagandistic campaign, but under the invitation to reflection. And Lincoln engaged broadly in that invitation to reflection.

But one more word about that. I don't want to go on for too long. But I will say this about his meeting with Frederick Douglass and others, the

black representatives in the White House. People have criticized that for his, as I said earlier, being insensitive to the feelings of these black people, and insulting them. But they forget (and I'm sure that Peter Wood points this out, in fact, in his book) that what Lincoln did was not simply speak to them, but invited in the press, spoke openly. He was speaking not to them only, but to the whole country. So, when I said earlier, what he was doing was elevating them to the standard of those who settled North America, he was saying to the country, they are such people as your ancestors, no different. And so, he's able to show even while talking about the prospect of leaving (because you may not be able to live here), that you are nonetheless perfectly worthy. Thus leading people to think about it in those terms.

David Randall

A follow up question. Part of what one wants for education is to educate American students to be able to listen and to judge a Lincoln addressing them. What do we need to teach our students such that they are able to hear a Lincoln, to think, to respond to him properly as self-governing citizens?

William Allen

Oh, the answer to that is very direct and immediate. It is exactly what I said to Silverstein at the *Times*, let him speak for himself. Let us say to our students, read what he said. Read George Washington, read Thomas Jefferson, read James Madison. Know what they actually said. Don't bog down in interpretations, and fights and battles over narratives, which is now the current expression. Have you ever wondered, what does this term narrative mean, when we have a history? What's the difference between history and a narrative? Well, a narrative is what is meant and designed to replace history, i.e., to start inventing and stop thinking. So, we invite them to think by actually

diving into the history itself.

David Randall

I'm now going to channel you a question from an attendee. And it is significant that this person is signed in as an anonymous attendee. "I am a PhD student in early American history, who is currently facing down a field in which the core tenet of the 1619 Project permeates almost every conference and newly published work. How would you recommend that up and coming scholars navigate this challenge? And how can we push back against their false narrative and narratives like it, which feels so dominant, both in society generally, and in the academy, specifically?"

William Allen

Precisely the right question. Precisely the point that is envisioned when Abraham Lincoln says to those black folk there in the White House that you may have to leave this country. What that means is you have to be able to face the reality that sometimes you have to say no. You have to speak out in determined defiance of the effective dominance of those who would otherwise rule you. For there is no cute or clever way to evade their demands. One can evade their demands only by rejecting them. Now does that mean therefore losing professional opportunity? That's, of course, the burden of the question. Well I will tell you, there are very few of us who early in our careers did not face the same kinds of questions and had to come to conclusions for ourselves, what it would mean to follow the course we were following. Some of us at least simply decided that we aren't doing it for the sake of complying with the prevailing standards of opinion. We're doing it because of the necessity, because the inquiry was controlling us, in much the way Lincoln in the letter said the events were controlling him. And the commitment to the inquiry was more powerful than the threat imposed

upon us for going astray from the prevailing orthodoxy. And so one has to gird up one's loins, prepare to step out, and stand out. Yes, to face rejection. We don't say rejection anymore, do we? We say canceling. To face canceling. Are these things not happening? They're happening, even as we all sit and speak.

I just published in the latest iteration of the American National Character Project an essay from Lawrence Mead. And he had that same essay in substantial form published in another journal, from which it was withdrawn, cancelled, because it was not acceptable to those same prevailing currents that are now being imposed upon the writer of this question. I introduced the preface in the *Political Science Perspectives* journal, where we published our series of essays explaining exactly how Larry's piece fit into the broader conversation and was necessary for the conversation. Our's hasn't been challenged in the way the other journal had its challenges and responded with cancellation. But we nevertheless made that affirmation, because we saw the context was one in which it was important to stand up and say no, to defy the dominance of prevailing orthodoxy. And in that case, to do it even in advance because we were suitably informed of the prospect of something like that happening. So I say to this person, it may be the case that you've got to take enormous risk, you may have to sail on trackless seas, landing on uncharted wastelands, heavily forested and hard to find your way. But you must have the resolve to do that, if it's important enough for you to seek the promise of liberty.

David Randall

Thank you. And thank you on behalf of the person asking the question. I will follow up with another question from the audience. Following up on the concept of open debate, to reason through the alternatives in the public forum, what procedures

can we develop to create public participation and engagement?

William Allen

We have the procedures in place, and so I would say the thing that has to be developed is some degree of habituation to stepping forth into the open practice. I will remind you, you don't need reminding, but I'll say it anyway, of the early years of NAS. That's what NAS is all about. That's how it began, right. We looked around and we said, this is a dreary landscape, *una selva oscura*, I might say. We're wandering and lost in a dark forest here. Let's start talking and maybe, even if there's no light penetrating, the noise we make will have the effect of light because we'll begin to identify one another and spread the range of conversation. And that's how NAS began.

And I think that practical step is still now the needed practical step to force the conversation, force the inquiry, do it as openly as possible, because, remember, the human sources, the human resources, do not disappear. They can be imposed upon in certain cultural and social contexts. Therefore, they can be forced into silence. But it doesn't mean the native capacities are at all destroyed. They only become dormant when unused. And it takes therefore a resolute will to resist dormancy, to preserve conversation, to insist upon openness. That is why I've always made the argument that what's so important, especially on university campuses, is not so much freedom of speech, but free inquiry. Freedom of speech is a good thing. I'm not at all arguing against that. But the legal promise of freedom of speech is secondary to the overriding importance of free inquiry. So, insisting upon sustaining free inquiry, and having a conversation about it, is the single most practical step you can take.

David Randall

Thank you. I'm going to follow up with a question from the same questioner. On another front, how do we as black Americans create a forum to challenge the "scholars" in the black community who tout this as scholarly work, in order to make the greater public aware of diversity of thought within the black community?

William Allen

Well, now I'm going to give you an advertisement. Exactly one month from today, plus one, I will be opening the annual policy summit for the Center for Urban Renewal and Education, where I'm now affiliated as Chief Operating Officer. And we have devoted this summit to launching an initiative over the course of the next twelve months to develop a report on the state of black America. And the whole purpose of that report is to establish a solid scholarly based response to that orthodoxy the questioner is referring to. In fact, I'll take this opportunity to invite proposals to be directed to me to make contributions to that project, because I will in a couple of weeks be putting out the call for papers in this project across the landscape of cultural, social, political, economic, religious, etc. dimensions of black life. I, through CURE, aim to bring a comprehensive statement, powerful enough to respond to and displace that dominant argument. So that's what I'm doing practically. And I invite others to join me in it.

David Randall

Thank you, I will also do an advertisement for a fellow fighter against the 1619 Project, [1776 Unites](#), founded by Robert Woodson. They're doing yeoman work, they've just issued a new curriculum, the first of several curriculum units planned precisely to combat and provide a replacement to the 1619 Project curriculum. Moving to the next question on our list. Lincoln's process of engaging in dialogue with opponents and the public generally was a critical

and central part to finding best solutions for all by inviting all to think clearly about possible options and consequences in the real world. This is a comment more than a question. But is this a common, and therefore a correct, perception of Lincoln and what he was doing?

William Allen

I would say so, but let's remember that we have to also freight that analysis with the reality of what he accomplished in the Gettysburg Address. And so remember, he hearkened us back to the promise of the Declaration of Independence, or schooling seventy years ago. He brings us forward to the sacrifices in the battlefield. He talks about the structures, the moral structures for which we lived and died. And then he talked about the future. He didn't merely invite us to think, but he also formulated a vision for us to ponder. So yes, we're invited to think, but we're also given something substantive to think about. And it's those two things together that made Lincoln so very powerful. He was not unlike George Washington in that respect. He was, of course, more of a public speaker than George Washington. But George Washington was equally perceptive, equally engaged in structuring public expectations in such a way as to present a moral course, in so stark a light, that it would be very difficult for people, not at least to pay attention to it, and perhaps even somewhat difficult not to embrace and follow it.

David Randall

Thank you. I have a question following up on what you were saying about how Lincoln could not have the experience of integration to build on when talking about race in America. But we can now talk about the experience of integration. A slow process, particularly since 1960. But one could even say that when Martin Luther King writes he is not yet able to look on the experience of a fully integrated America, it's still looking to the future. My ques-

tion then would be, who are the figures since 1965 whose writings about the existence of integration are worthy of study, both for commenting on the history and themselves being writings as worthy of study as Lincoln's or King's? Who are the people of the canon of the future who can speak of the experience of racial integration that we've been doing in the last half century and more?

William Allen

Well, that is, of course, an intriguing question, because it cuts in multiple directions, and some of them cross cutting. And I could go to the obvious names of people like Shelby Steele and Tom Sowell and add to them people like Glenn Lowry who's been back and forth on these questions, but still contributing very significantly. Or I could speak in older terms of people like Booker T. Washington. And I could speak, of course, of the whole line of the early 20th century thinkers, whether it was Ralph Ellison, for example, or someone else, all of whom contributed in meaningful ways to dealing precisely with this question. But what I would say is the greatest thing for us to confront right now is the question of whether integration hasn't happened, and is no longer to be talked about? That's the question which we've been denying to ourselves, the possibility, the prospect which we've been refusing to see. And there have been deliberate arguments, rejecting it as a possibility. But we know, of course, legal segregation has gone. So what is this other question? The question, of course, is how do people move about in the society? What are their relative circumstances vis-a-vis one another? Have we gotten past the stage? That certainly often troubles people when they walk into a university cafeteria, and see race-differentiated groupings sitting at the lunch tables. For some people that causes a problem. For others not so much. And so the question is, does integration mean that people have lost the liberty to associate? Does integration mean that there still won't be

patterns of difference among sub sectors, groups in society based on a number of factors having nothing to do with the inherited dynamics of racism? Well, if we're thinking about this in a systematic way, it's obvious, as in any society, that there are going to be such patterns that are going to emerge that have nothing to do with non-integration.

And so the real question is, what explains the presence in the suburbs of the United States, for example, of more than a majority, more than 50% of black Americans? Black Americans in the majority do not live in the inner city anymore. They too dwell in the suburbs. Is that an element of integration? Does it mean because there is still some level of differentiation in employment and even more significantly, in wealth, that that's not integration? But not if you look at it from the perspective of what are the opportunities people dispose of? If they fully have the opportunity to provide for themselves, to attain respected status and make a contribution to society, and if that's true across the board, then a society is fully integrated. And it doesn't matter what checkerboard pattern you produce, when you take a snapshot of it. That is totally irrelevant to the question of integration. So I say our challenge today is to ask, who gives voice to the reality? And that means who can get us past the discourse of victimization?

I would say, for example, that the promise that Dr. King laid out in his early years became subsequently vitiated because he turned to a language of victimization, which undercut what he said earlier, and that actually infected large segments of the black community as a poison. Because it became the basis on which those who mine victimization, nurture it, use it to drive a wedge into the society. And so it is more important to recover from false rhetoric and false understandings than it is to find new pathways forward. I have laid out these arguments for fifty years in occasional writings and presentations, and I do not now

see that directing attention to particular writings will have the magic touch. In 1988 I delivered before the American Association for Affirmative Action a full presentation on the question prophetic of the point at which we have arrived. I concluded thus:

Ask yourself how your organization approaches affirmative action considerations. You do not have to say it out loud, so you may be candid. Is the foremost question the candidate's peculiar and highly valued contribution to the organization's mission? Do you speak of it as a highly efficient means of auctioning up the talent pool to guarantee the best choice? A way of forcing personnel searches out of beaten paths and unreflective habits? Or, is it first a means of recordkeeping and gameplaying designed to ward off the bureaucrat's inquiry? Does your organization talk affirmative action while hypocritically knowing—perhaps intentionally—that all it needs are some statistics to satisfy EEOC?

If your situation corresponds to the latter questions, you're at the crossroads. For in that case, you are implementing affirmative action as welfare—our national policy. Not only will you make no valuable contribution that way, but you are actually sowing the seeds of future whirlwinds of discord.

I commend to you instead the attitude, that there is no one who belongs in your organization who needs any special help from you to get there. Indeed, you probably need to put on your best behavior to entice them, for such candidates (whether for employment or studies) are the people who will spell the difference between an organization's success or failure. And they do exist, in every color, shape, and gender. Why does your company need an affirmative action officer to find such people? For that question I must leave you and your company to search your own souls. I live in a very small community here in Northern Maryland, where if you were present, you would

be rather astounded how casually and easily people move among one another, including intimately in terms of family structures, across races. And it's not something you would expect to see (if you listen only to the rhetoric). Then if I told you that this is happening increasingly, throughout especially the southern United States, you'd be more alarmed. You'd say, how can that be? Nobody talks that way? Well, part of the reason is simple. It is happening mainly among lower classes. And there is the real irony of the circumstances. The lowest classes in the United States are rapidly integrating, inter-marrying, changing the face of the United States. Nothing is more true today than that it is in fact an absolute lie that America is going to become a nation with a majority of minorities. Why? Because you can't change chemistry. We understand the relationship of solvents and solutes. And we know what the solution is going to look like. It's not going to become darker. It is gradually going to become, in fact, whiter, if you simply take a long enough perspective and understand chemistry. Because that's what's happening. So, we have lots of false narratives, which are distorting our ability to appraise what is actually happening among us. I would say, then, we should look for those arguments that set forth the claims of progress. That's where we want to identify them, rather than those who dwell upon the lingering legacies.

David Randall

You live in Maryland, you've taught in Michigan, you've taught in Colorado. I think if I look for it, I can find out that you traveled around the United States a lot. How much does this all change region by region? We keep on talking about America as if all the regions had blended together and geographical and state diversity had all gone. Is that actually true? Do we have anything to learn by getting out of one state and moving to another and seeing what it's like

and how it changes state by state?

William Allen

Well, that's interesting you would say that, of course, because I mentioned Larry Mead earlier. His work is about cultural diversity. And he sees some fixity there. I had another participant in this American National Character project named Colin Woodard. And his argument is the one that you're now making, that there isn't really one America; there are these several regional Americas and they're quite distinct, and they're not in fact integrated.

I think, certainly, I can attribute part of this to the fact that I've been just about everywhere, in some substantial form. There's not a state in the Union where I have not spent considerable time, but it is also the case that one can look about and measure mobility and see the extent to which there isn't the kind of fixity these rigid cultural arguments call for. It is the case that there is one United States, not just a collection of regionally distinct cultural entities. However, that there are regional colors I would certainly say is true. When I go back to my birth state of Florida, I see the regional color. I know the difference. But guess what? There are more non-Floridians living in Florida than there are Floridians because of the back and forth. And these non-Floridians show the regional color. It's the strangest thing.

So you can say yes, of course, there're going to be these multiple patterns of civil and social life across all the regions. But they are no longer fixed. They are very fluid. They are interpenetrating. And because they're interpenetrating, they constitute one rather than many.

David Randall

Thank you. And having asked you a few questions,

I'm going to go back to another question from the audience. Do you see the assault on Lincoln as a linchpin of the 1619 Project's broader assault on the American past and ideals?

William Allen

Indeed, I do. The original review of the 1619 Project that I published with the *Law and Liberty* blog identified what the *Times* was doing in the spirit of what it did in the early 1850s, when the *Times* was first founded. And that's when it criticized Harriet Beecher Stowe (who had traveled to England in an anti-slavery crusade) for displaying her country's shame abroad. And they made that attack on Stowe as part of a tacit alliance with the whole positive good school. And so I described them now as returning to the positive good of slavery school. And we can see that the attack on Lincoln in critical race theory, in the 1619 Project, is part and parcel of Randall's [James G. Randall] historical revisionism, which included the attack on Lincoln in the 1920s, and included the unreconstructed southerners who talked of Lincoln the tyrant. Now, while they seem to be coming from different perspectives if we talk of mere politics, they nonetheless all embrace, ultimately, the Calhounian argument that the Declaration of Independence is a self-evident lie. They all stand on that ground. And therefore they cannot distinguish themselves one from the other. The *Times* is simply a modern-day John C. Calhoun. The critical race theory is simply modern-day Alexander Stephens. It goes on and on. There's not an inch of difference or daylight between them in that regard. Their arguments are all mined from the same source.

David Randall

Thank you. I should say, the old Professor Randall, he's not a relation of mine, we simply share a last name.

Something which keeps coming up is how does one reach high school teachers? They are a particular audience. There is this 1619 Project curriculum, there's always the question of overworked teachers who don't have time to do stuff on their own and have to take whatever curriculum is offered to them. But they are crucial intermediaries. How does one approach high school teachers to make sure that they teach the appropriate high school history? And what should that high school level history be?

William Allen

Well, I think, of course, that is so very true. And it's so hard at one level to penetrate there once they are installed in their professions and bearing its burdens. But we know one thing that is always a very good opportunity to pursue, and that is that there is some advantage to teachers at all levels, K through 12, participating in continuing education. They can be getting credits, and they can gain incremental compensation associated with it. And there are many people who do that. Obviously, among the most prominent today are the people who are enrolled in the Masters in American history and government program at Ashland University, in which I participate very frequently. There are others like Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge who offer opportunities for teachers, and there are others that one has simply to search for to multiply the number of opportunities for teachers to perform that kind of service, and then be exposed especially to training in the use of primary sources.

I've done a great deal of this over the past thirty or so years. And I must say I've always been impressed with how powerfully-affected the teachers are when invited to undertake this, because it's formed no part of their collegiate education, and no part of their standard curriculum expectations. But they discover

in it, first, intellectually satisfying questions, and then, secondly, they discover that when they bring it to their students, their students come alive, become awake. And I have seen through thousands of cases the power of this, and I recommend to everybody extending it as far and wide as possible. Forget about the teachers' unions and associations, just find the teachers through these in-service opportunities and bring the material to them. They don't even need a narrative, they just need to be exposed to the material and discuss it among themselves, and already their lives will have changed.

David Randall

Thank you. I want to go from there to another question from the audience.

Why do you think Frederick Douglass was excluded from any meaningful recognition in the 1619 Project?

William Allen

That is a difficult question to answer at one level, and at another level, perhaps not so much. Let's remember this. There are no authorities in the 1619 Project that are not contemporary. Think about it and go back and look at it. They don't actually refer to any historical authority of any substance. So that they begin the whole process of historical revisionism by discounting all prior authority. So that Douglass (I don't know their specific formulations, but I can certainly envision that Douglass) is suspect to them, because he defended the United States, you know, in a speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" He began from a point of skepticism, but he ended on a powerful note. And shortly after that speech, he comes to his determinate defense of the Constitution as an anti-slavery document.

But what does the 1619 Project mean to do except completely to reject, to discredit, to delegitimize the

Constitution? And so Douglass, who went from his 1848, "What country have I?", the Constitution is "a pact with the devil" mirroring the Garrisonians, to 1854, where he's defending the Constitution as an anti-slavery document, would be very embarrassing to the 1619 Project. For they want to say, America root and branch is committed to slavery. There is no defense for the Constitution; there's no defense for the Declaration of Independence. Douglass would be a very inconvenient partner in that particular mission.

David Randall

Thank you. I suppose we're getting near to 3:15, which is when we would end this. I'm going to turn this into the autobiographical/church-Sunday testimony of experience. How did you come to Lincoln, Douglass, the Constitution? You came to where you are now as a student, as an American growing up. Could you talk a little bit about that, because I think that would be wonderful for people to get so that they can tell that to other people, younger Americans, so they can know how they too can come to these figures.

William Allen

I'm tempted to quote Topsy and say, "I just grow'd that way." I specs I just grow'd that way. And there's some truth in that actually. I was obviously raised in the segregated South, and I taught in thoroughly segregated schools. And when I left after graduation to go to college, I made the decision to attend college at Pepperdine, in California. And that was my first immersion in the wider world, so to speak. But I had to make that decision against the background of the Civil Rights Movement (remember, this was the beginning of the 1960s and so the Civil Rights Movement had just sprung into existence, and there were demands for change all over the place). I was initially admitted to the University of Florida in Gainesville,

where I would have been integrating the University. And I chose to go to the small college in California instead. So that you might say from the beginning, I was less moved by the social projects than reflecting upon what were the essential elements in building the talents that God had given me. And I was a devout Christian, and Pepperdine was a religious school. And I also had a brother in Los Angeles who could help me afford it. So, it became a no brainer for me to say, that's where I'm going to go.

But I also went there with certain dispositions, socially and politically, such that in my early years, I became a political activist. I was a Goldwater campaigner back in the 64 campaign. And I exposed myself to the necessity of thinking about questions of politics, and questions of the human good outside of the classroom. And the two began to interact in a powerful way, sufficiently that I came to realize, by the time I approached graduation from college, that it meant everything to me to be able to pursue some good, and I had gone to college as a pre-med student, thinking that that's how I would serve. I lost the interest in that, having a lot to do with the fact that I did not find myself in a profession surrounded by people who seemed to embrace that mission with the same reasons that I was embracing it. For I really cared about finding how to make a contribution, how to do something good. But by the time I graduated, I realized I didn't know what the good was. And I came quite by accident across someone by the name of Harry Jaffa. I was invited to appear on a platform at the, I think the original Philadelphia Society meeting in San Francisco, to present on the new left. I made the presentation; I sat down, and I was relatively pleased with my performance, despite the fact that I was surrounded by people whom I had no business being among, in many respects. And then Harry Jaffa was on the program; I didn't know him, hadn't read his works. I listened to him. And by the time he was done, I sat with my mouth hung

open saying, I have no business being here. I've got to go wherever he is, and find out what it is. I need to know; for I obviously know nothing. And that's the turning that led me into political philosophy and the commitment to the study not only of the ancients but the American founding.

Then finally, in pursuing this, and being completely committed to pursuing primary sources, when I came to teach the origins of political parties in the United States, I did what nobody ever did in teaching that course, which was to include some writings from George Washington. And I discovered quite by accident, that he was not the bumbling fool so many had represented him to be. He was not unintelligent; in fact, he was the guiding light of the founding. I was blown away. And that shaped the rest of my career.

David Randall

Thank you. I must say, we haven't actually talked about Washington all that much in the course of this conference, which, given that I helped plan this is perhaps a fault of mine. But it's wonderful of you to mention the father of our country. I want to end your speech, and this conference, on that note, looking back at George Washington first and foremost. Thank you very much for that, for everything, for the speech. And, Peter, I don't know if you want to come on to say a word or so as well.

Peter Wood

Thank you, David. You did a wonderful job with the question period. Far better than I would have done. Thank you, Professor Allen, I think that was a high point for me of this whole conference. I really enjoy your flair, your literary knowledge, your historical depth, all wrapped together into one. Chuck, you're up as our speaker for the ending of this conference.

Chuck DeVore

Well, what a wonderful honor it is to wrap up for Professor Allen, whom I had the distinct pleasure of meeting back in 1986 or so when he was running for the Senate Republican nomination in California, with twelve other republicans including the economist Art Laffer and Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther member who was a Republican running for the Senate back then, and supervisor Mike Antonovich. It was quite an amazing cast of characters. And I had the opportunity to see Professor Allen give a speech. And I was like, wow, this is great! Too bad that people can't just be elected to high office based on what they know about the founding, and based on acclamation. So in any event, it's also fun, of course, to hear the connection with Professor Harry Jaffa. I had the opportunity to have a bit of that connection as well when I went to Claremont McKenna College. And later I had the opportunity to be a Lincoln Fellow. So, many connections in our mutual past. So what a delight to see you again.

And what a powerful conference! I mean, think about it, you know, the 1619 Project launches, you come up with the 1620 conference, and a couple of days after you launch, President Donald Trump issues his 1776 Commission executive order. I mean, who knew that the National Association of Scholars had that sort of clout, to be able to see something like that happen while you were doing your conference.

It certainly shows the potential, the possibility of ideas rooted in truth. And in fact, as we know from the cautionary words of George Orwell, "who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past." And that's really what the 1619 Project is all about. Right? They're trying to hijack the American past and reshape our future because they don't like this country. They certainly don't love it the way it is. And they certainly don't love its founding premise, its founding principles.

That's why the 1620 conference is so vitally important, to be able to get this right. I'm certainly proud as an officer with the Texas Public Policy Foundation to play a modest role in helping facilitate this conference. My name again is Chuck DeVore, I'm Vice President of National Initiatives with the Texas Public Policy Foundation in Austin, Texas. And again, congratulations to everyone who participated in this very important conference. Thank you so much for convening and for sharing your ideas. And 'til next time, let's see how much more progress that you can make in restoring the principles that this great nation was founded upon.

Peter Wood

I have a few final words. This conference has a very unusual form. We've strung it out over the course of an entire week, and I think many people have loyally come back to us day after day for one exciting talk after another. Some of you may have missed particular talks, but we're going to have this whole thing available for you if you want to revisit what you missed or go back and revisit some of the highlights.

Early on, we had John Stauffer and Diana Schaub discuss the absences from the 1619 Project's conception of history. They focused on Frederick Douglass and the close cooperation of black and white abolitionists. Susan Hanssen spoke on the spirit articulated by the Adams family, no, not that Addams family, which connected American liberty and the natural law tradition. Paul Rahe spoke on the political philosophy behind the American founding, as well as arguing that the American founders could in good prudence have gone further towards the abolition of slavery than they did. Peter Coclanis dissected flaws in the 1619 Project's economic history, and gave us a truer accounting of the role of slavery in the emergence of the American economy in the 19th century.

Richard Johnson, Robert Maranto, and Jamie Gass very spiritedly discussed different ways of teaching American history and how it's gone wrong. They also provided suggestions on how to fix it, particularly with an eye to combating the 1619 Project curriculum. Robert Paquette placed the history of American slavery within the context of slavery worldwide and other forms of servitude around the world. And he argued that what was distinctive about American slavery was the American shift towards the ideals that it had enunciated in the Declaration. It slowly put these into practice. The ideals of liberty, including abolition. Kevin Gutzman, Jason Ross, and Joseph Fornieri discussed the 1619 Project's errors in its discussion of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and Abraham Lincoln. We revisited some of that. Cathy Young, Wilfred Reilly, and Carol Swain discussed the implications of the 1619 Project as public intellectuals concerned with public policy. And today, William Allen drew eloquently on an episode in Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in which Cassy terrifies Simon Legree by manufacturing a ghost. That actually drives him to drink himself to death. The chill winds that blast through the walls of the national edifice, as he put it, are driving society towards structures of dependence, and therefore tyranny. There were so many regnant phrases in your speech, I couldn't write them all down. So I'm glad we have that on record.

Well, that's the skeleton of what we accomplished in this week. I think it is a truly splendid conference, if I do say so myself. We've been getting quite a bit of email from people who think that we really did accomplish something here. Our efforts we know are certainly not alone. We're bolstered in confidence from seeing that President Trump has taken up the 1619 Project as one of the present perils to the country, that the 1776 Unites folks have been pointing out an agenda of focusing on the more positive

accomplishments of blacks in American history. The Heritage Foundation and others have been focusing on ways in which the public can be stirred out of its complacency to take some active resistance to this propaganda that is leading us in a very illiberal direction, and towards racial division rather than the natural unity that this country can and should enjoy.

With that, I guess I will call the conference to a conclusion at this point. And thank all of you for participating, whether as speakers or as viewers of this venture in making use of modern technology to get us all in one big room that isn't in one place. So with that, good afternoon.