

Google suppressing World Socialist Web Site content in its search results for the New York Times' 1619 Project

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Based on current search results and other web site analytics, it is clear that Google is manipulating its search algorithm to suppress the popular, original and authoritative content published by the *World Socialist Web Site* on the *New York Times Magazine's* 1619 Project.

Starting on September 3, the WSWS began publishing a series of statements and articles in response to the 1619 Project. Over the past four months, the WSWS has published two dozen articles, statements, interviews, lectures and book reviews that have criticized the project as a racist falsification of American history.

Among the most popular articles published by the WSWS have been a series of interviews with leading scholars of American history—Victoria Bynum, Gordon Wood, James McPherson, James Oakes, Adolph Reed, Clayborne Carson and others—who raised fundamental criticisms of fact and method in the *Times's* project.

These articles and interviews have been accessed by hundreds of thousands of readers. On social media, especially Twitter—where the hashtag #1619Project has been dominated by the criticisms made by the WSWS—all of the 1619 Project article links have been posted, viewed and shared by tens of thousands of people all over the world.

By mid-December, responding to the considerable public interest in the issues raised by the WSWS, major corporate news organizations such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Atlantic*, *National Review* and the *Daily Signal* published their own articles about the opposition of the historians and the WSWS to the 1619 Project.

In most cases, these publications cited the *World*

Socialist Web Site as the first to oppose the racist historical narrative published by the *New York Times*. Many publishers and journalists have both cited in their print editions and shared links on their online publications to *World Socialist Web Site* content.

On December 20, a group of five historians submitted a letter to Jake Silverstein, the editor of the *New York Times Magazine*, raising their primary criticisms of the 1619 Project and requesting that the magazine publish corrections to the errors of historical fact contained in the magazine. Although Silverstein refused to correct the project, he was obliged to acknowledge that the *World Socialist Web Site* had published the historian interviews in the first place.

However, despite the growing online audience for the WSWS—including a large number of backlinks to its pages—a basic Google search of “The 1619 Project” or “1619 Project” does not serve any WSWS pages within its top results. Far from it; links to WSWS articles do not appear in Google search results until the third or fourth page of listings. A Google News search of the topic does only slightly better with pages from the WSWS being displayed midway down on the second or beginning on the third page of the results.

Given that all Google searches are influenced by a combination of factors—including the location, search history, web history and social networks of each individual user—it is very likely that those looking for web sites covering the “The 1619 Project” but have never visited the *World Socialist Web Site* before will not see any WSWS links until they reach four or more pages of search results.

It is also a well-known fact among Internet tech experts that the top five positions in Google's organic

(nonpaid) search results receive 75 percent of referral traffic and the first page of results (top ten positions) gets 92 percent of all referrals. This means that all subsequent pages of search result listings beyond the first page share the remaining 8 percent of referrals and so their site traffic is severely diminished.

The low ranking of WSWS 1619 Project content on Google searches—zero on page one, very few on page two and the majority on page three or more—is on its face evidence of search algorithm manipulation.

Last September, Google published a statement highlighting the fact that “original reporting” would be given priority in its search results. The statement said, “Recently, we’ve made ranking updates and published changes to our search rater guidelines to help us better recognize original reporting, surface it more prominently in Search and ensure it stays there longer.”

Google further explained that it uses algorithms that factor “hundreds of different signals” to organize internet news content “in a way that is helpful.” Google then said, “To tune and validate our algorithms and help our systems understand the authoritativeness of individual pages, we have more than 10,000 raters around the world evaluating our work—their feedback doesn’t change the ranking of the specific results they’re reviewing; instead it is used to evaluate and improve algorithms in a way that applies to all results.”

It is therefore clear that a combination of Google algorithms and human “search raters” are demoting the original reporting and “authoritativeness” of WSWS pages and elevating other sites and pages to the top positions in its search results.

The suppression by Google of referrals to the WSWS is borne out by the data. According to our referral analytics dashboard, visitors searching the internet for the keywords “1619 Project” were directed to the WSWS by Microsoft’s Bing search engine 12 times more than those referred to the site by Google.

This means that Google, which controls more than 92 percent of all internet search activity, referred just 8 percent of the total number of visitors coming to the WSWS from browsers searching for the keywords “1619 Project.”

Despite the censorship, the WSWS articles on the 1619 Project have acquired a large audience. But it is a fact that the total number of readers of these articles would be substantially higher if search results were not

being manipulated and directed away from the WSWS by Google’s staff of internet police.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact