

The World Socialist Web Site's exposure of the 1619 Project and the defense of historical truth

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This speech was originally delivered at an international online rally welcoming the relaunch of the World Socialist Web Site on October 25. The full event can be viewed here.

As others have noted in this meeting, the defense of historical truth is central to the work of the *World Socialist Web Site*. Our political practice is always based on an assimilation of the lessons of the past. The most powerful weapon the working class has is the knowledge of the historical experiences through which it has passed, in order to know what it has won, what it must defend today and how it must fight to achieve socialism in the future.

From the defense of the Russian Revolution and Leon Trotsky against the Stalinist and Post-Stalinist Schools of Historical Falsifications to the fight against the trivialization of Nazi crimes in Germany, the Trotskyist movement has been, from its founding, at the forefront of the fight for historical truth.

The great historian of the Left Opposition, Vadim Rogovin, explained that “Like ideological ones, historical myths are a product of immediate class interests...Refuting these myths is only possible by rehabilitating historical truth—the honest portrayal of actual facts and tendencies of the past.”

Over the past year, the fight to defend historical truth took a new form—the defense of the revolutionary traditions of the great democratic revolutions in the United States, the American Revolution and the Civil War. It came as a surprise to many when the WSWS emerged at the forefront in opposing the *New York Times*’ 1619 Project, a rewriting, indeed falsification of American history, presenting the history of the US as a history of racial conflict.

In fact, we are the only publication that has raised any criticism of the project from the left. This confusion was based on the fact that the genuine principles of Marxism and socialism have been so distorted and misrepresented by the middle class pseudo-left, which is in fact an anti-left.

Our first in-depth exposure of the project was published on September 3, 2019, just two weeks after the project was published with much fanfare in a special edition of the *New York Times Magazine*. From the start we recognized that the most profound theoretical and political issues were at stake.

The rewriting of history is always related to the political interests of the present. As we noted in our original exposure, the aim of the *New York Times* “is to create a historical narrative that legitimizes the effort of the Democratic Party to construct an electoral coalition based on the prioritizing of personal ‘identities’—i.e., gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, and, above all, race.” Above all it erases the struggles of the working class from American history.

We defend all that is progressive in history. We understand history not as a morality tale, but as the evolution of mankind through the development of the class struggle. We understand that the working class cannot conquer new heights if it does not defend what has been won in the past. And we are irreconcilably opposed to all efforts to divide workers along racial, national or gender lines.

Marxism long ago settled its account of the limitations of bourgeois democracy, but it never gave up the fight for equality. The progressive concept inscribed on the banners of the bourgeois revolutionaries of the 18th and 19th century, that “All

men are created equal,” finds its most advanced expression today in the Marxist movement.

The United States is the center of world imperialism. Its working class has been forged from innumerable nationalities and ethnicities from every corner of the globe. The challenge of uniting the working class in the United States is essential to the victory of socialism worldwide.

We are proud to have provided a mass audience for the best scholars of American history, including Gordon Wood, James McPherson, James Oakes, Victoria Bynum, Clayborne Carson, Richard Carwardine, Adolph Reed, Jr. and Dolores Janiewski, to voice their criticisms of the 1619 Project. They have all devoted their life’s work to the defense of historical truth and the principles of democratically motivated scholarship.

Due to the work done by the WSWS, the 1619 Project has been thoroughly exposed. The material that we have published, all of which can be easily accessed thanks to the relaunch of the site, has been viewed hundreds of thousands of times by readers worldwide. Above all, this powerful response makes clear that workers in this country and around the world are deeply attached to the revolutionary history of the United States—embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the struggle to smash slavery led by Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War—as well as the monumental struggles out of which the working class emerged.

The relaunch of the WSWS is rooted in an understanding of the relationship of the past to the present. Indeed, in its very form it is aimed at drawing these connections. The WSWS is itself an immense repository of historical truth. What the WSWS has achieved over the last two decades must be brought forward and expanded to arm the international working class for the monumental struggles to come.



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