

Book review

Gerald Horne's counter-revolution against 1776

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17 March 2021

Nearly 250 years after the American Revolution, the event continues to exert a powerful influence on the present. The ideals of the revolution—human equality and the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—have a deep appeal to Americans, and moreover have inspired political idealists and revolutionaries around the world.

In 2014, Professor Gerald Horne of the University of Houston published a book with a startling thesis: that the American Revolution was fought to preserve slavery. This was no genuine revolution, Horne argued, but rather a *counter-revolution* waged to defend slavery against the true revolutionary force, the abolitionist British Empire—hence the name of the book, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776*. The American victory was not a progressive or world-historic event. It was a catastrophe. Horne suggests an analogy: the American Revolution created “the first apartheid state.”

Horne's thesis, if true, would be a fundamental re-writing of American and world history. If the United States was born in a struggle not for political liberty, but rather to preserve the wretched system of property in man, then 1776 was nothing but a prelude to the founding of the Confederate States of America in 1861. The longstanding appreciation of the American Revolution's direct impact on the French Revolution of 1789, and all the revolutions that were to follow—a position supported by Marx and Engels—would also be false. Moreover, if the British Empire were the revolutionary force in the contest with the American colonists, the well-established understanding of its centrality to imperialist reaction over the course of the 19th century—in Ireland, India, Egypt, China and South Africa, to name a few places—would also be called into question.

Horne's book is influential among those who insist American history can only be conceived of as a struggle between races. Though the *New York Times*' 1619 Project did not initially provide any sources, lead author Nikole Hannah-Jones later said that Horne was a source for her central claim that “one of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery.” *The Counter-Revolution of 1776* has been praised by vociferous defenders of the 1619 Project, such as Prof. David Waldstreicher of the City University of New York and Nicholas Guyatt of Cambridge University. The *New York Times* itself has given Horne a prominent platform, inviting him to sit on a panel for a public discussion of the 1619 Project in March 2020, chaired by historian Karin Wulf of William and Mary University.

The trouble is this: Horne's scholarship does not stand up to the slightest scrutiny. Horne's work is worse than inaccurate: it is, in large measure, a work of fiction. His interpretation of source material is so inaccurate as to be fanciful: quotes are truncated to invert their meaning, sources are misattributed, and even elementary facts are misrepresented—or are just plain wrong.

Honest historians, who deal with a vast array of sources, make mistakes

here and there. What makes Horne's misrepresentations so galling is not just their magnitude and number, but that they are central to his project of rewriting American history. In order to appreciate just how fundamentally Horne's thesis—if true—would revise American history, we must first briefly review the basic facets of the understanding of the American Revolution that have been established by a century of scholarship.

Background

The well-supported scholarly understanding of the American Revolution is that it emerged as a conflict between Britain and her North American colonies over issues of sovereignty, representation, taxation and self-government. The Seven Years' War (1756–1763), a costly conflict that pitted Britain and Prussia against France, Austria, Spain and Russia on battlefields ranging from Continental Europe to India to the Americas, left Britain severely in debt. To address its financial needs, beginning in 1763, the British government attempted to tighten enforcement of trade regulations in the Empire, and, in an unprecedented move, it imposed direct taxes on the American colonies. These colonies were accustomed to a high degree of self-government, with their own legislatures and courts, though most (but not all) colonies had a crown-appointed governor. The formal relationship between the British government and the colonies had never been clearly delineated, and the conflict over taxation sparked an intense debate and re-evaluation of the constitutional order. Did the British Parliament have an absolute right to legislate in all matters throughout the Empire? Could Parliament directly impose taxes on the colonists, despite the latter's lack of representation in Parliament? Or was Parliament's authority limited to the British Isles (and perhaps regulation of trade within the Empire), with the only tie binding the colonies to Britain being common allegiance to the monarch? Were the colonial assemblies on an equal footing with Parliament, or subordinate to it?

The first phase of the conflict began with Parliament's passage of the Stamp Act of 1765, which taxed printed materials, sparking a wave of disobedience in the colonies. It quickly became clear that the Stamp Act could not be enforced, and Parliament repealed it in 1766. However, Parliament was unwilling to concede the principle, and immediately passed the Declaratory Act, proclaiming its right to legislate on all matters in the colonies. Parliament made a new attempt at imposing taxes on the colonies in 1767, in what became known as the Townshend Acts. These acts led to a new wave of strife and political debate. In 1768, the British government sent military forces to occupy the town of Boston, the hotbed of colonial resistance. The British government relented again in 1770,

repealing most of the new taxes. However, an attempt in 1773 to enforce the remaining tax on tea sparked a new wave of colonial resistance, most famously in the Boston Tea Party. In a dramatic escalation, the British government in 1774 passed a series of punitive measures, later known as the “Intolerable Acts” by Americans, which included the effective imposition of military government on Massachusetts and the complete closure of the port of Boston. These measures were seen throughout the Thirteen Colonies as an attempt by the British government to settle the question of Parliament’s authority by force.

By this point, a clear American view of the Empire had formed, in which the colonial assemblies were equal to Parliament, and in which only allegiance to the monarch bound the colonies to Britain. This view was fundamentally irreconcilable with the view of the British government, that Parliament had the authority to legislate on all matters throughout the Empire. By 1774, the British government, under the Tory Prime Minister Lord North, had decided that the matter must be settled by force, making armed conflict all but inevitable. On the other side of the Atlantic, the colonies had begun to coordinate their actions, establishing an inter-colonial assembly, the Continental Congress, even more directly challenging Parliament’s authority. A situation of dual power had been created. Fighting finally broke out just outside of occupied Boston on April 19, 1775, setting off the military conflict that ended with British recognition of American independence in 1783.

Horne’s thesis

There have been sharp disagreements in the historiography over interpretation of the American events. The Marxist view—which dates back to Marx himself—has always held that the American Revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution rooted in the development of the middle class in conflict with the *ancien régime* of feudal property and political relations, nurtured by the ideology of the Enlightenment. Among American historians there has been intense debate over the significance and extent of social conflict among the colonists, and over the relative weight to place on ideological versus economic developments. Nonetheless, there has been universal agreement that the American Revolution gathered force around a series of conflicts over taxation, sovereignty and political representation.

This is incompatible with Horne’s thesis that the revolution was fought to protect slavery. The scholarly view is the product of generations of study. It is supported by mountains of documentary evidence. Contemporary letters, newspapers, pamphlets, parliamentary debates, and so on, attest to the centrality of taxation, representation and parliamentary sovereignty to the conflict. Given this, Horne has a high bar to clear if he is to overturn such a well-established understanding. So how is it that Horne supports his thesis?

Horne’s argument hinges on a single legal case that occurred in England in 1772, in which a judge ruled that a slave owner, Charles Stewart, could not compel a slave he had bought in the colonies, James Somerset, to board a ship for a life of continued slavery in Jamaica. *Somerset v. Stewart* helped lead to the end of slavery in England proper, but not in the British colonies, where slavery continued for more than 50 years. Horne argues that the British government of the early 1770s had strongly abolitionist tendencies, and that fear of British abolitionism was a major force that led the Americans into rebellion. This is how Horne arrives at his astonishing thesis that the American Revolution was, in reality, a *counter-revolution* waged in defense of slavery.

There are immediate and obvious objections to Horne’s thesis.

First, it is chronologically wrong. As we have seen, the “American

crisis” was already well underway by 1772, when *Somerset v. Stewart* was decided. Second, it is without archival support. None of the major texts of the Revolution (such as Thomas Paine’s celebrated pamphlet *Common Sense*, the *Declaration of Independence*, or the Continental Congress’ *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms*) make any mention of *Somerset v. Stewart*, or indeed of British abolitionism at all.

The American Revolution was argued out in the open. If defense of slavery were among its major causes, this would be reflected in the countless pamphlets and newspapers that still survive from the revolutionary era. Yet this is not the case. In addition, the private letters and diaries of many of the most important figures of the revolution still exist in archival form, where they have been pored over by historians for generations. These letters and diaries make almost no mention of the *Somerset* decision.

This is unsurprising, because there was no abolitionist *movement* in Britain or anywhere else prior to the American Revolution, which first gave the impulse to anti-slavery sentiment in both Britain and the newly formed United States. Several states (including Massachusetts, where resistance to Britain was strongest) abolished slavery during and immediately after the revolution, and by 1804, all the states north of Maryland had passed laws setting slavery on the path to extinction. The tendency toward an antislavery position in the northern states, among both whites and blacks, carried on and strengthened in waves, culminating in the election of President Abraham Lincoln in 1860, the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery in 1865. In Britain, an abolitionist movement gained strength after the American Revolution as well. But the British Empire, far from being set on abolitionism, as Horne insists, carried on slavery in its West Indies possessions until 1833, and tacitly aligned with the Confederacy in the American Civil War.

Against the strength of these objections, how is it that Horne grounds his thesis? Horne must somehow establish that the American revolutionaries were deeply alarmed by British abolitionism and driven by the *Somerset* decision into rebellion. The pursuit of this false aim leads Horne to his many “errors.”

A close reading of Horne’s Introduction

Horne begins his introduction to the book by describing the celebrations of Africans in London on hearing the decision of the judge, Lord Mansfield, in the case of *Somerset v. Stewart*, which secured Somerset’s freedom. Horne then contrasts this celebration with the reaction in Virginia:

Others were not so elated, particularly in Virginia, where the former “property” in question in this case had been residing. “Is it in the Power of Parliament to make such a Law? Can any human law abrogate the divine? The Law[s] of Nature are the Laws of God,” wrote one querulously questioning writer. (p. 1)

Horne sources this quote to the August 20, 1772 edition of the *Virginia Gazette*. In Horne’s telling, the writer in the *Virginia Gazette* is upset that the judge has overturned the “Laws of God,” of which slavery is supposedly a part. The full text of the letter that Horne quotes is conveniently available online, and presents a very different picture. Here is the full passage from which Horne excerpts:

It has been said that Lord Mansfield has advised a Law respecting the Property of Negroes in England. [1] Is it in the Power of Parliament to make such a Law? Can any human Law abrogate the divine? The Laws of Nature are the Laws of God. By those Laws a Negro cannot be less free than a Man of any other Complexion. If Negroes are to be Slaves on Account of Colour, the next Step will be to enslave every Mulatto in the Kingdom, then all the Portuguese, next the French, then the brown complexioned English, and so on till there be only one free Man left, which will be the Man of the palest Complexion in the three Kingdoms!

Far from being a defense of slavery, this letter is a full-throated attack on the absurdity of enslaving people because of the color of their skin. Horne has severely misread the original source, and by selectively quoting from it, has managed to invert its meaning. Contrary to his interpretation, the letter shows a Virginian newspaper expressing abhorrence at the idea of human bondage.

Next, in order to show that opposition to the *Somerset* decision supposedly extended beyond Virginia, Horne cites a letter in the *New-York Journal* from August 27, 1772. Horne writes:

Indicating that this was not a sectional response, a correspondent in Manhattan near the same time assured that this ostensibly anti-slavery ruling “will occasion a greater ferment in America (particularly in the islands) than the Stamp Act itself,” a reference to another London edict that was then stirring controversy in the colonies. (p. 1).

This time, Horne’s truncation of the original does not significantly alter its meaning. However, Horne’s thesis is undermined by the correspondent’s statement that opposition to the *Somerset* decision will be especially concentrated in the West Indies—a bastion of imperial Loyalism—rather than the mainland colonies. The original letter continues by complaining that the decision will leave West Indies slave owners vulnerable to legal challenges on their human property. [2]

Completing his roundup of responses in the colonies to the *Somerset* decision, Horne writes:

The radical South Carolinian William Drayton—whose colony barely contained an unruly African majority—was apoplectic about this London decision, asserting that it would “complete the ruin of many American provinces.” (p. 1)

Here, Horne gets it completely wrong. William Henry Drayton did not write these words. Drayton was a South Carolinian who was initially sympathetic towards Britain and opposed colonial boycotts of British goods. However, in 1774, after the passage of the Intolerable Acts, Drayton publicly broke with his previous stance, publishing *A Letter from Freeman*, [3] in which he denied Parliamentary authority over the colonies. Horne appears to be confusing Drayton’s pamphlet with a reply published by an anonymous Loyalist, under the pseudonym of the “Back Settler.” The “Back Settler” disputes Drayton’s assertion that English liberties should be extended wholesale to the colonies, writing that were rights to be universal, the *Somerset* decision would apply in the colonies:

Were the Freeman’s Principles adopted, and every genuine Right of Liberty which is established in England made attainable in America, it would complete the Ruin of many American Provinces, as well as the West-India Islands. A general Manumission of Negroes is a Doctrine badly calculated for the Meridian of either America or the Islands; yet it is one of those original Rights, the Exercise of which all human Forms immediately enjoy, by setting a Foot on that happy Territory where Slavery is forbidden to perch. [4]

Leaving aside the fact that no speaker in the history of the English language has ever written the word “perch” while in a state of “apoplexy,” it appears that it is not the revolutionary William Drayton who was “apoplectic” at the *Somerset* decision, but rather a Loyalist (though Horne’s use of the adjective “apoplectic” is over-the-top, as even the Loyalist shows no hint of anger at the *Somerset* decision). Horne’s own source seriously undermines his thesis that opposition to Britain was motivated by the *Somerset* decision. Indeed, if anything, it shows that at least one South Carolina Loyalist was moved to support Britain out of fear of the dangerous doctrines of universal liberty being espoused by the revolutionaries.

But more than just undermining his thesis, these examples call into question Horne’s scholarship. Just two paragraphs into Horne’s introduction, he has already truncated an antislavery letter in the *Virginia Gazette* to make it appear as if it were instead arguing in favor of slavery, and he has misattributed a supposed attack on the *Somerset* decision to a revolutionary, when the statement was in fact made by a Loyalist. Even if one were to grant the most charitable interpretation—that these misrepresentations are unintentional—this level of sloppiness with sources renders every statement in the book suspect. Readers should not trust any claim made by Horne that they themselves have not verified by tracking down the original source.

At this point, one would be justified in putting the book down, but some readers might wonder: does Horne continue to misrepresent and misattribute quotes?

The case of Henry Laurens of South Carolina

Sure enough, misrepresentation of sources and events abounds throughout Horne’s book. An exhaustive list would run nearly as long as the book itself, so this review will be limited to a few examples.

Horne often combines unrelated statements and events, implying a connection where there is none, or suggesting that a particular statement means something different from what the speaker intended. In a passage that is typical of his method, Horne discusses Henry Laurens, a prominent revolutionary from South Carolina. In this passage, Horne combines a number of unrelated events:

Prominent slaveholder—and anti-London rebel—Henry Laurens of South Carolina was told that just before the April 1775 confrontation at Lexington between the republicans and the Crown, the latter planned to instigate the enslaved to revolt to blunt the settlers’ initiative. By 1774, he was reportedly convinced that if London had its way, “none but Slaves & his Officers and their Task Masters shall reside in America.” He may have heard of the British subject of African descent David Margrett, who was in South Carolina in 1775 preaching about abolition. (p. 19)

This juxtaposition makes it appear as if Henry Laurens was warning that the British would empower slaves in America, replacing white colonists. However, as the book that Horne cites for this quote makes clear, Laurens' 1774 statement that "none but Slaves & his Officers and their Task Masters shall reside in America" was made in response to the Intolerable Acts. [5] What Laurens meant with this statement was that British policy would make Americans slaves to Parliament. This type of rhetoric was common in British politics in the late 18th century, with "slavery" referring to any form of utter dependence and powerlessness. Laurens' statement had nothing to do with the *Somerset* decision, slave revolts or abolitionism—it expressed his concern that the American colonists would be subjected to the arbitrary rule of Parliament. Yet Horne attempts to turn this statement of protest against the Intolerable Acts into something else—a declaration that Britain was favoring slaves.

Horne also suggests that Laurens' statement may have been prompted by his fear of an abolitionist preacher. If Henry Laurens had feared abolitionism, as Horne asserts, he would not have had to look across the Atlantic to Britain. His own son, John Laurens, who served on George Washington's staff in the Continental Army and ultimately fell in battle in 1782, was an outspoken critic of slavery. John Laurens campaigned for the creation of a black regiment in South Carolina, in which slaves would serve in exchange for their freedom. Explaining his plan to his father, John wrote:

I hope that my plan for serving my Country and the oppressed Negro-race will not appear to you the Chimera of a young mind deceived by a false appearance of moral beauty, but a laudable sacrifice of private Interest to Justice and the Public good. ... [6]

John eventually won his father's support for the plan, and even persuaded Congress to authorize the creation of a 3,000-man-strong black regiment, but the plan never overcame opposition in South Carolina, and the regiment was not raised. [7] Yet Horne makes no mention of any of this—part of a pattern of omitting antislavery views of leading American revolutionaries that he repeats throughout the book. Instead, we are treated to a misconstrued statement by Henry Laurens about metaphorical slavery, and not told of his son's actual antislavery views (not to mention Henry's own personal doubts about the institution).

The closest that Horne comes to mentioning John Laurens' plan to raise a black regiment is when Horne references a letter in which Washington dismisses the idea of enlisting slaves into the Continental Army (p. 237). Horne describes this letter as being from Washington to John Laurens, dated 30 March 1779. [8] However, no such letter exists. The letter that Horne apparently intended to reference was, in reality, written on March 20, 1779, and was addressed not to John, but to his father, Henry Laurens. [9]

Such errors abound in Horne's book. The only mention of John Laurens in the text of the book (as opposed to the footnotes) comes when Horne attributes the following statement to John: "Never put your life in their [slaves'] power for a moment" (p. 196). Opening up the source that Horne references for this quote, one finds that these are in fact the words of Henry Laurens, not those of his son John. [10] This misrepresentation does not advance Horne's argument, so one must assume that it is due to his usual carelessness with sources and facts. Yet there is something more than mere carelessness in Horne's selective use of his source. While he picks out Henry Laurens' statement about not trusting slaves, he does not inform the reader that according to the same source, "[Henry] Laurens' lifelong attitude towards slavery was, at best, ambivalent. Privately, he detested the institution." [11] Instead, Henry Laurens is depicted as a man motivated to revolt against the British Empire by fear of abolitionism.

Benjamin Franklin and Granville Sharp

Benjamin Franklin also falls victim to misrepresentation in Horne's book. In a passage that implausibly begins by asserting a "special relationship" between London—then ruling over a vast empire heavily dependent on African slavery—and Africans, Horne purports to quote Benjamin Franklin:

Moreover, the settlers thought that London's special relationship with Africans had gone too far, to the point where they thought they had reason to fear that the Crown's sable arm would come down with a crash upon their heads. "Every slave might be reckoned a domestic enemy," according to Benjamin Franklin speaking almost two decades before 1776. (p. 19)

These words come from an address by the Pennsylvania assembly to the governor, opposing the enlistment of indentured servants. [12] It was delivered by a legislative committee, on which Franklin sat, in 1756, before any conflict with Britain had emerged. Far from representing a fear that Britain would free the slaves or would enter into an alliance with them, the address actually expressed fear that British policy would encourage the growth of slavery in Pennsylvania, an institution that the Pennsylvania assembly viewed as a potential source of trouble. The assembly considered slaves to be generally disloyal, and as a consequence, did not want additional slaves to be brought into the colony. There is no hint that the assembly feared the British would ally with Africans against colonists. Quite the opposite, the address argues that if Pennsylvania imported more slaves (as opposed to white indentured servants), "Pennsylvania soon [will] be unable to afford more Men for the King's Service, than the Slave Colonies now do."

Horne fails to mention that Franklin himself was, by the time of the revolution, a staunch critic of slavery, and was in contact with Granville Sharp, the abolitionist who campaigned for Somerset's freedom. In fact, Horne makes only a few references to Franklin anywhere in the book, which is surprising, as Franklin is perhaps the only one of the leading founders who is documented to have made any statement about the *Somerset* decision. All Horne tells us about Franklin's reaction to the *Somerset* decision is the following:

Slaveholders had long felt uncomfortable in London, objecting to disapproval there of their brutal floggings of their Africans and the perceived laggardness in retrieving runaways. As Somerset's case dragged on, more antipathy to slavery was engendered in the British isles, further outraging colonists who had normalized this form of property as any other, like a steed or a parrot. When the abolitionist Granville Sharp bashed colonists in this regard, Benjamin Franklin struck back vigorously. (p. 209)

A reader would be forgiven for coming away from Horne's book believing that Franklin opposed Sharp's efforts to abolish slavery, or even that Franklin was accustomed to flogging slaves and therefore felt uncomfortable in supposedly abolitionist London. Amazingly, Horne leaves out Franklin's actual reaction to the *Somerset* case. A few days before the case was decided, Franklin anonymously published a blistering

attack on slavery in the *London Chronicle*. [13] Franklin opened his piece by wishing that slavery would be abolished in the colonies:

It is said that some generous humane persons subscribed to the expence of obtaining liberty by law for Somerset the Negro. It is to be wished that the same humanity may extend itself among numbers; if not to the procuring liberty for those that remain in our Colonies, at least to obtain a law for abolishing the African commerce in Slaves, and declaring the children of present Slaves free after they become of age.

Franklin then criticized the hypocrisy of setting free a single slave in England, while continuing to exploit slaves in the colonies. Referring to the misery on sugar plantations in the colonies, Franklin wrote:

Can sweetening our tea, &c. with sugar, be a circumstance of such absolute necessity? Can the petty pleasure thence arising to the taste, compensate for so much misery produced among our fellow creatures, and such a constant butchery of the human species by this pestilential detestable traffic in the bodies and souls of men? *Pharisaical Britain!* to pride thyself in setting free a single Slave that happens to land on thy coasts, while thy Merchants in all thy ports are encouraged by thy laws to continue a commerce whereby so many hundreds of thousands are dragged into a slavery that can scarce be said to end with their lives, since it is entailed on their posterity!

What makes Horne's omission of Franklin's reaction to the *Somerset* case even more significant is that this appears to be the most substantial reference that any of the leading founders made about the *Somerset* case during the revolutionary era. A thorough search of the letters of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay and James Monroe yields no references to the *Somerset* decision. In a book that centers on the supposedly decisive influence of the *Somerset* decision on the revolution, Horne omits the most substantive (and perhaps the only) statement about the case made by a leading figure in the revolution, and that statement just happens to be an attack on the institution of slavery.

In his misrepresentation of Franklin as a proslavery figure, Horne omits another significant fact—Franklin's collaboration with Sharp, the leading British abolitionist. In his correspondence with the noted American Quaker abolitionist Anthony Benezet, several months after the *Somerset* decision, Franklin wrote that "I have commenc'd an Acquaintance with Mr. Granville Sharpe, and we shall act in Concert in the Affair of Slavery." [14] If Horne is aware of Franklin's statements about the *Somerset* case and collaboration with Granville Sharp, then his decision to omit them from his book and to instead portray Franklin as critical of the *Somerset* decision is simply indefensible from a scholarly point of view. His only possible defense here is that he was unaware of Franklin's statements on the matter, in which case he is simply a poor scholar.

Sharp was not only a friend of Franklin, but also a vocal supporter of the American cause. In 1774, Sharp published a pamphlet opposing taxation without representation, which Franklin (then living in London) sent to be distributed in America. [15] After war broke out between Britain and her American colonies, Sharp resigned his post in the ordnance office in protest, writing to his superiors, "I cannot return to my ordnance duty whilst a bloody war is carried on, unjustly as I conceive, against my fellow-subjects." [16] It would be strange indeed if the man behind the

Somerset case were then to support a counter-revolution aimed at preserving slavery.

To present Franklin as a proslavery figure is all the more galling, given that in the later years of his life, Franklin became increasingly involved in antislavery politics. [17] At the time of the *Somerset* case, in addition to his connections to Benezet and Sharp, Franklin also corresponded with the Pennsylvania antislavery campaigner (and future signer of the Declaration of Independence) Benjamin Rush. [18] After the revolution, Franklin was elected president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which argued not only for the abolition of slavery, but also for public measures to support former slaves. Some of Franklin's last public acts were an appeal to the public against slavery, [19] a petition to Congress calling for the abolition of slavery, [20] and a biting satirical attack on proslavery arguments. [21] It is difficult to imagine that Horne could be unaware of these facts.

The Gaspee Affair

One further example of Horne's "scholarship" absolutely must be mentioned, simply because of the staggering level of incompetence it reveals: Horne's treatment of the Gaspee Affair, a major milestone in the lead-up to the revolution, gets nearly everything wrong on a basic factual level.

HMS Gaspee was a British customs vessel, whose captain became hated in Rhode Island for his aggressive enforcement of customs duties. In June 1772, the Gaspee ran aground on a sandbank while chasing the packet ship Hannah in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island. While HMS Gaspee was stranded on the sandbank, a group of Rhode Islanders forcibly boarded, looted and torched the ship, shooting (though not killing) its captain in the process. The British government established a commission which unsuccessfully sought, for months, to build a case against those involved in the attack on the Gaspee. Though the identities of the ringleaders were known, few locals were willing to testify. The Gaspee Affair revealed the depth of the crisis between Britain and her American colonies, escalated political tensions and led the colonies to begin coordinating their actions more closely. It is often viewed as being of similar importance as the Boston Tea Party to the progress of the revolution. The issues at play—customs duties and opposition to the direct imposition of British authority in the colonies—support the long-established view of the causes of the revolution.

Horne manages to invent a fanciful alternate history of this event. According to Horne:

A climax was reached on 10 June 1772 in the wee hours of the morning, when a brig arriving from Africa, the Gaspee, entered Newport and was boarded by officers of the Crown. In response, a mob of about five hundred male settlers rioted, burning the British ship. (pp. 203–204)

Nearly everything in this passage is wrong. Firstly, the Gaspee was the Royal Navy ship enforcing customs off Rhode Island. The crew of the Gaspee were the ones attempting to board American ships. Horne has gotten it completely backwards. Secondly, the Gaspee was not arriving from Africa, but instead had been patrolling Narragansett Bay for months (and had been operating in American coastal waters for years). Even if one assumes that Horne has confused the Gaspee with the American ship it was pursuing, the Hannah, his description still does not match the actual events. The Hannah was sailing its usual route along the Rhode Island

coast, not arriving from Africa. The detail about Africa appears to be a complete fabrication, meant to imply that the ship had some connection to the slave trade. Moreover, British customs officers did not board the Hannah, which escaped after the Gaspee ran aground. How a professional historian could so thoroughly mix up the basic facts of such a famous event is truly puzzling.

Horne's broader argument about the Gaspee Affair is that it supposedly reflected Rhode Islanders' fears of British abolitionism. In order to argue this, Horne points out that Aaron Briggs, one of the few witnesses that British officials were able to coax into testifying against the instigators of the attack on the Gaspee, had African (and possibly Native American) ancestry:

[T]he accelerant that made this blaze difficult to contain was the presence of Aaron Briggs as the chief witness, signaling that the Crown was moving in a direction different from the settlers' [sic] on the touchy question of Africans, which helped to solidify the gathering notion that London was moving toward having this despised group impose discipline on the settlers. (p. 205)

Yet Horne offers little to nothing to substantiate this hypothesis. Horne tries to paint Ezra Stiles, a prominent Congregationalist minister in Rhode Island (and later president of Yale College), as being incensed at the British reliance on Briggs. Citing Stiles' diary, Horne writes, "It was 'obnoxious, alarming and arbitrary,' he spat out, adding noticeably acerbic words about Briggs—the Negro-Indian Witness' who seemed curiously 'Tutored and instructed'—adding to the perception that Africans were being used to bludgeon colonists" (p. 206). Yet an actual examination of Stiles' diary shows that he had far more acerbic words for a white witness, whom Stiles described as "a spendthrift and Madman." [22] What Stiles viewed as "obnoxious, alarming and arbitrary" was not the British commission's reliance on a black witness, but rather its power to send colonists to far-off London for trial, where they would presumably face a less sympathetic jury. As Stiles wrote in his diary on June 10, 1773:

Notwithstanding all Palliatives and Softenings, the Commission was justly obnoxious, alarming and arbitrary—it not only meditated but directly provided for seizing and sending home persons to London ... the Trial was to have been in England. [23]

Horne concludes, "Stiles's ire was a reflection of the growing conflict between the local elite—flush with profits from the slave trade—and the Crown" (p. 206). Yet Horne has given no support for this thesis. In order to believe it, one has to ignore a very important fact, which Horne conceals from the reader—Stiles himself came to oppose slavery during the 1770s. In 1773, Stiles and another leading Congregationalist minister in Rhode Island, Samuel Hopkins, published a public letter on their plan "to send the gospel to Guinea," by training two former slaves born in Africa as missionaries. In the letter, Stiles and Hopkins attacked the slave trade:

And it is humbly proposed to those who are convinced of the iniquity of the *slave trade*; and are sensible of the great inhumanity and cruelty of enslaving so many thousands of our fellow men every year, with all the dreadful and horrid attendants; and are ready to bear testimony against it in all proper ways, and do their utmost to put a stop to it: Whether they have not a good opportunity of doing this, by cheerfully contributing, according to

their ability, to promote the mission proposed. ...

Stiles and Hopkins published a second public letter in 1776, this time directly tying their proposal to the ideals of the revolution: "while we are struggling for our civil and religious liberties, it will be peculiarly becoming and laudable to exert ourselves to procure the same blessings for others, so far as it is in our power." [24]

At the time that he wrote these letters, Stiles himself still owned one slave, a man named Newport. Stiles freed Newport in 1778, and in 1790, Stiles became the first president of a Connecticut antislavery society. Stiles' own developing opposition to slavery throughout this period seriously undermines Horne's thesis that Stiles represented a proslavery elite upset with British abolitionism. Horne chooses simply not to inform the reader of Stiles' actual views on the matter.

More generally, Horne's attempt to explain Rhode Islanders' opposition to Britain as a consequence of their supposed support for slavery and fear of British abolitionism falls apart when one looks at the history of antislavery measures in Rhode Island. In June 1774, the Rhode Island legislature banned the importation of slaves, directly tying this measure to the revolutionary struggle. The legislature declared:

Whereas, the Inhabitants of America are generally engaged in the preservation of their own rights and liberties, among which, that of personal freedom must be considered as the greatest; and as those who are desirous of enjoying all the advantages of liberty themselves, should be willing to extend personal liberty to others; Therefore be it enacted by the General Assembly, and by the authority thereof it is enacted, that for the future, no negro or mulatto slave, shall be brought into this colony; and in case any slave shall hereafter be brought in, he or she shall be, and are hereby, rendered immediately free, so far as respects personal freedom, and the enjoyment of private property, in the same manner as the native Indians. [25]

Immediately after the end of the revolutionary war, Rhode Island passed an act that gradually ended slavery in the state, by declaring all people born in the state from March 1, 1784, onward free. The preamble of the act quotes from the Declaration of Independence, connecting the abolition of slavery to the ideals of the revolution:

Whereas all Men are entitled to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, and the holding Mankind in a State of Slavery, as private Property, which has gradually obtained by unrestrained Custom and the Permission of the Laws, is repugnant to this Principle, and subversive to the Happiness of Mankind, the great End of all civil Government: *BE it therefore Enacted* ... [26]

Horne simply ignores these antislavery measures, and instead claims that "in the 1770s, as anger at London was rising, the legislature in this maritime colony moved to penalize those who freed their slaves" (p. 207). This is a reference to laws requiring masters who freed their slaves to post a bond, in order to guarantee that if people freed in this manner became indigent, they would not impose a financial burden on the colony. Of course, Horne does not explain this—the reader is left with the impression that the Rhode Island legislature was firmly proslavery. Towards the end of his discussion of the Gaspee Affair, Horne writes that "the settlers revolted successfully, driving London from the thirteen colonies and

leaving the Africans to confront the none-too-tender mercies of self-righteous republicans” (pp. 207–208). A reader of Horne’s book would have no idea that these “self-righteous republicans” promptly passed a law putting slavery on the path to extinction.

Overall, Horne presents Rhode Island in the lead-up to the revolution as a colony so committed to slavery that it rebelled against the mother country in order to preserve the institution. Horne’s thesis rests on the flimsiest of foundations—the race of the witness who identified the leaders of the attack on the Gaspee—and requires one to ignore the history of antislavery measures in Rhode Island. Exactly how much incompetence and how much dishonesty is at play is difficult to gauge here: Horne’s bungled attempt at describing the basic facts of the attack on the Gaspee points to incompetence, but his highly selective presentation of Stiles and Rhode Island point to a certain level of dishonesty.

The historical profession’s reception of Horne’s work

Given the extensive misrepresentations of basic facts and quotations in Horne’s book, one might wonder: how has it been received by the historical profession? Surely others have noticed Horne’s misrepresentations, and surely his work is discounted by serious historians.

And what sort of publisher would stamp their imprimatur on a work that manages to include multiple misquotations by the end of the second paragraph? The answer is the New York University Press, which describes the book as “trailblazing.” [27] But it is not just the publisher that has heaped praise on Horne’s work—the book has received positive reviews in top academic journals. In the *American Historical Review*, Kit Kandlin of the University of Sydney writes, “In a refreshing take on the independence movement, Horne places slavery and its expansion in North America during the early eighteenth century at the center of the conflict between London and its increasingly nervous and truculent colonies across the Atlantic.” Kandlin concludes with high praise for Horne’s work: “Eminently readable, this is a book that should be on any undergraduate reading list and deserves to be taken very seriously in the ongoing discussion as to the American republic’s origins.” [28]

In a blurb that adorns the back cover of some editions of the book, Prof. Waldstreicher gushes:

This utterly original book argues that the story of the American Revolution has been told without a major piece of the puzzle in place. The rise of slavery and the British empire created a pattern of imperial war, slave resistance, and arming of slaves that led to instability and, ultimately, an embrace of independence. Horne integrates the British West Indies, Florida, and the entire colonial period with recent work on the Carolinas and Virginia; the result is a larger synthesis that puts slave-based profits and slave restiveness front and center. The Americans re-emerge not just as anti-colonial free traders but as particularly devoted to an emerging color line and to their control over the future of a slavery-based economy. A remarkable and important contribution to our understanding of the creation of the United States.

As a scholar of colonial and early United States history, with a specific focus on slavery and antislavery movements, Waldstreicher should be capable of recognizing the shoddy nature of Horne’s work. It would be difficult to imagine that Waldstreicher would miss Horne’s complete

confusion about the Gaspee Affair, or that Waldstreicher would be unaware of antislavery measures taken by Rhode Island during and immediately after the Revolution. Assuming that Waldstreicher has read the book he has been promoting, one has to ask why he is willing to heap praise on such nonsense.

Prof. Padraig Riley of Dalhousie University is more hesitant and critical in his review in the *New England Quarterly*, worrying that “Horne tends to overstate the power of antislavery sentiment in Britain at the dawn of the American Revolution, and he downplays the potential challenges to slavery from within the new American states,” and that Horne’s description “masks significant sectional divisions over slavery that became more, rather than less, pronounced after the American Revolution.” Nevertheless, Riley seems to excuse Horne’s exaggerations by comparing his work to that of David Walker, an important African American writer and abolitionist of the early 19th century. (Horne’s only parallel to Walker is that he is also African American.)

Riley concludes on an equivocal note:

The Counter-Revolution of 1776 asks us to rethink the fundamental narrative of American history and to interrogate nationalist myths. Horne demands that historians consider slavery not as the exception to the republican promise of the American Revolution but rather as the norm insofar as protecting slavery was a fundamental cause of colonial revolt. As much as I disagree with certain of Horne’s conclusions, this seems to me the correct way to proceed. [29]

In a much more critical review, Prof. J. Kent McGaughy of Houston Community College-Northwest writes, “Horne’s effort to establish a connection between slave resistance and the decision to declare American independence is unsupported by the evidence. ... Toward the end Horne’s book devolves into a polemical justification for why his thesis must be true rather than a presentation of evidence that proves his thesis.” [30] McGaughy also picks up on Horne’s misrepresentation of sources, and provides yet another example from the introduction to the book:

Horne alters or misquotes sources, and far too often relies on primary sources cited in secondary works rather than referring to original documents. In his introduction, Horne focuses on tensions between the English and the Irish in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Horne, 9–10). As the War for American Independence begins, he quotes Arthur Lee: “Irish troops go with infinite resistance ... strong guards are obliged to be kept upon the transports to keep them from deserting as a whole” (10). Lee actually wrote: “The English and Irish troops go with infinite reluctance, and strong guards are obliged to be kept upon the transports to keep them from deserting by wholesale.” By leaving out Lee’s reference to the “English,” Horned [sic] changed the meaning of Lee’s quote, tailoring it to support his point. [31]

One has to wonder, among these professional historians who reviewed Horne’s provocative book, why is McGaughy the only one who explicitly took Horne to task for his extensive misrepresentation of sources? Did Kandlin and Waldstreicher simply miss the numerous misrepresentations throughout the book? One would expect that when asked to review a book that claims to so dramatically overturn the historiography of the American Revolution, professional historians would apply a modicum of scrutiny before giving their recommendation. Unless they plead incompetence, one

has to conclude that they were willing to let Horne's misrepresentations slide for their own purposes.

At least one non-academic reviewer has picked up on Horne's slapdash scholarship. Writing in the conservative news website *The Bulwark*, Cathy Young also caught Horne's misattribution of the Loyalist Back Settler's pamphlet to the revolutionary William Henry Drayton. Young uncovered additional misrepresentations, including Horne's claim that a revolutionary pamphleteer's attack on Lord Mansfield (the judge in the *Somerset* case) was motivated by support for slavery (the pamphleteer attacked Mansfield over completely unrelated issues—freedom of the press and the powers of juries). [32] Anyone willing to open up any chapter of the book and check the references will undoubtedly uncover many more misrepresentations.

Why does it matter?

What does it say about the state of the historical profession that only one academic historian took Horne to task for extensive misrepresentation of sources, while other reviewers in leading historical journals gave the work positive reviews? Just as importantly, how did such a sloppy, tendentious work ever see the light of day? Does NYU Press actually subject the books it publishes to peer review?

It would be one thing if Horne's book had simply fallen through the cracks, but through the *New York Times'* 1619 Project, his thesis has gained wide attention. In a now-deleted tweet, the lead author of the 1619 Project, Nikole Hannah-Jones, referenced *The Counter-Revolution of 1776* in support of her thesis that the American Revolution was fought in order to preserve slavery. [33] This is central to her larger aim—the claim that all of American history is a struggle between the white and black races.

Jamelle Bouie, a *New York Times* opinion writer and author of another essay in the 1619 Project, has repeatedly touted Horne's book on Twitter. [34] The *New York Times* consciously included Horne on the panel of historians it assembled for a public discussion of the 1619 Project. Coming in the wake of criticism of the 1619 Project by several leading historians, the purpose of the event was clear—to provide cover for the *Times'* claims about slavery and the American Revolution.

During the panel discussion, though it was clear that some of the historians present disagreed with Horne's thesis, they were reluctant to directly contradict him. The moderator, Karin Wulf (Professor of history at the College of William & Mary, and director of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture), approvingly cited Horne's book, quoting a passage that crystalized his thesis. [35] It is hard to imagine that Wulf is unaware of the implausibility of Horne's thesis, or that she does not notice any of his numerous misrepresentations. Why are highly knowledgeable, impeccably credentialed historians unwilling to correct obvious falsehoods in a public setting? And further, what role does the *New York Times'* sponsorship of Horne's "scholarship" play in historians' current reticence to honestly confront it?

In addition to recommending Horne's book, Waldstreicher has publicly defended the 1619 Project. In an article in the *Boston Review*, Waldstreicher notes that "[t]he arguments made by the 1619 Project are largely based on the work of scholars such as Horne, Holton, Taylor, myself, and others (indeed, Hannah-Jones and Silverstein have acknowledged as much)," and refers to Horne as one of a group of younger "scholars" who "question the establishment view of the Revolution and the founders." [36] Nicholas Guyatt, a lecturer in modern history at Cambridge University, who has defended the 1619 Project in the pages of the *Times*, [37] has recommended Horne's book on Twitter, writing that "[t]he argument of *Counter-Revolution of 1776* is complex

but important, and I think everyone should read that book. (Esp. for the current debate)." [38]

Others outside of academia have also promoted Horne's work. *The Counter-Revolution of 1776* has been featured by the *Financial Times*, [39] the *Guardian*, [40] *Vox*, [41] Salon.com [42] and *Democracy Now!*. [43] The *Intercept* has interviewed Horne, [44] and Ryan Grim, the *Intercept's* D.C. bureau chief, has plugged *The Counter-Revolution of 1776* on Twitter. [45] *Publishers Weekly* gave *The Counter-Revolution of 1776* a starred review (reserved for "superlative books"), describing Horne's research as "meticulous, thorough, fascinating, and thought-provoking." [46] Though it is disappointing to see the popular press promote such gross misrepresentations of history, it is not surprising that they would do so in a political environment dominated by racial politics, and in which important elements of the historical profession have abdicated their responsibility to vigorously confront such misrepresentations.

So how is it that a book replete with glaring errors and misrepresentations has been boosted by academic historians and major cultural institutions? The errors in this book were not difficult to uncover. As we have seen, the second paragraph of the introduction contains two serious misrepresentations: an antislavery text truncated to make it appear as if it were instead arguing in favor of slavery, and a Loyalist pamphlet misattributed to a Patriot. Ultimately, it is difficult to explain how professional historians could promote this book without invoking political motives. While there are still many rigorous historians who do careful research, there is also a genre of tendentious and ultimately dishonest historical writing, which is exemplified by Horne's work. Horne's book serves a modern-day political purpose, which Horne himself has made clear in numerous public pronouncements: to advance racial politics in the modern-day United States, and to reject the idea that there was any progressive content in the American Revolution.

One final fact should be mentioned, which goes some way towards explaining Horne's willingness to misrepresent facts and sources: Horne is affiliated with the Communist Party of the USA, a Stalinist organization. In 2009, responding to an article critical of the rehabilitation of Stalin in modern Russia, Horne wrote that Stalin's crimes were no greater than those of the founding fathers of the United States. [47]

In the realm of history this connection is doubly significant. Stalinism, as a counter-revolutionary political tendency, has always been dependent upon historical falsification. Stalin's consolidation of power in the Soviet Union was built not only on the bones of the revolutionary generation of October 1917, but on the total rewriting of the history of the Russian Revolution to suit the needs of the bureaucracy he represented. Stalin's historical methods—what Trotsky called "the Stalin school of falsification"—was emulated by acolytes the world over who were once popularly known as "Stalinist hacks." It is out of this school that Horne emerges.

Largely unchallenged and even legitimized by the historical profession, it is this style of thought, which, laundered through the *New York Times'* 1619 Project, is now being injected into the curriculum of schools throughout the United States as a means of dividing working class youth along racial lines.

Notes:

[1] This is a reference to Lord Mansfield's suggestion, made during the trial, that Parliament could pass a law explicitly allowing slavery in England.

[2] From *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers*, by David A. Copeland (see the chapter, "The Somerset Case and the Anti-Slavery Controversy, 1772").

[3] William Henry Drayton, *A Letter from Freeman of South-Carolina, to the Deputies of North-America in the High Court of Congress at Philadelphia*. Charleston, 1774. Available through Google Books.

[4] The Back Settler's pamphlet, "Some Fugitive Thoughts on a Letter Signed Freeman," is included as Pamphlet 24 in the collection, *The American Revolution: Writings from the Pamphlet Debate Vol. 2 1773-1776*.

[5] J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009. p. 68.

[6] John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 2 February 1778. <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/letter-to-henry-laurens-1-14-1778/>.

[7] Gregory D. Massey, "The Limits of Antislavery Thought in the Revolutionary Lower South: John Laurens and Henry Laurens." *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 63, no. 3 (Aug., 1997), pp. 495–530 (36 pages). <https://doi.org/10.2307/2211648>.

[8] See Horne's footnote 25 for Chapter 10, referenced on p. 237 of *The Counter-Revolution of 1776*.

[9] "From George Washington to Henry Laurens, 20 March 1779," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-19-02-0533>.

[Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 19, 15 January–7 April 1779, ed. Philander D. Chase and William M. Ferraro. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009, pp. 542–543.]

[10] Gregory D. Massey, "John Laurens and the American Revolution." Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2000, p. 15.

[11] *Ibid.*, p14.

[12] "Pennsylvania Assembly: Address to the Governor, 11 February 1756," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-06-02-0166>.

[Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 6, April 1, 1755, through September 30, 1756, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, pp. 396–400.]

[13] "The Sommersett Case and the Slave Trade, 18–20 June 1772," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-19-02-0128>.

[Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 19, January 1 through December 31, 1772, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975, pp. 187–188.]

[14] "From Benjamin Franklin to Anthony Benezet, 10 February 1773," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-20-02-0030>.

[Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 20, January 1 through December 31, 1773, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, pp. 40–41.]

[15] Granville Sharp, *A Declaration of the People's Natural Right to a Share in the Legislature* (1774). Google Books. "From Benjamin Franklin to Granville Sharp, 21 January 1775," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-21-02-0245>.

[Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 21, January 1, 1774, through March 22, 1775, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978, p. 453.] "From Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Cushing, 27 July 1774," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-21-02-0135>.

[Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 21, January 1, 1774, through March 22, 1775, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978, pp. 262–263.]

[16] Prince Hoare (ed.), *Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq.* Cambridge University Press, 2014. pp. 124–126.

[17] Gary B. Nash, "Franklin and Slavery." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 150, no. 4 (Dec., 2006), pp. 618–635 (18 pages). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4599029>.

[18] See, for example, Franklin's correspondence with Rush about an antislavery pamphlet that Rush had written and sent to Franklin. "To Benjamin Franklin from Benjamin Rush, 1 May 1773," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-20-02-0111>. "From Benjamin Franklin to Benjamin Rush, 14 July 1773," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-20-02-0167>.

[Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 20, January 1 through December 31, 1773, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, pp. 192–193, 314–316.]

[19] Benjamin Franklin, "An Address to the Public, 9 November 1789" in *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 10, ed. Albert Henry Smyth. The Macmillan Company: New York & London, 1907. pp. 66–68. <https://archive.org/details/writingsbenjami15frangoog/page/n96/mode/2up>.

[20] Benjamin Franklin, "Petition from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, 3 February 1790." <https://franklinpapers.org/framedVolumes.jsp?vol=46&page=392>.

[21] "To the Editor of the Federal Gazette, 23 March 1790." in *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 10, ed. Albert Henry Smyth. The Macmillan Company: New York & London, 1907. pp. 86–91. <https://archive.org/details/writingsbenjami15frangoog/page/n116/mode/2up>.

[22] *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I, January 1, 1769 – March 13, 1776*, ed. Franklin B. Dexter. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901, p. 335. <https://archive.org/details/literarydiaryofe01stil/page/335/mode/1up>.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 384. <https://archive.org/details/literarydiaryofe01stil/page/384/mode/1up>.

[24] These plans are discussed in Oliver Wendell Elsbree, "Samuel Hopkins and His Doctrine of Benevolence." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4 (Dec., 1935), pp. 534–550 (17 pages). <https://doi.org/10.2307/360358>. The letters themselves can be accessed at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/To_the_Public%2E_There_Has_Been_a_Design_Formed_%E2%80%A6_to_Send_the_Gospel_to_Guinea.

[25] "An Act prohibiting the importation of Negroes into this Colony," in *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in New England, Vol. VII, 1770-1776*, ed. John R. Bartlett. Providence: A. Crawford Greene, 1862. p. 251. <https://archive.org/details/recordsofcolonyo07rhod/page/251/mode/1up>.

[26] Gradual Emancipation Act of 1784.

[27] NYU Press: <https://nyupress.org/9781479806898/the-counter-revolution-of-1776/>.

[28] Kit Kandlin, *American Historical Review*, vol. 120, issue 1, February 2015, pp. 235–236, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/120.1.235>.

[29] Pdraig Riley, *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 88, no. 1 (March 2015), pp. 166–169 (4 pages). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24718211>.

[30] J. Kent McGaughy, *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, vol. 82, no. 4 (Autumn 2015), pp. 546–550 (5 pages). <https://doi.org/10.5325/pennhistory.82.4.0546>.

[31] See Arthur Lee to Benjamin Franklin, 13 February 1776, included in *American Archives: Containing a Documentary History of the English Colonies in North America, from the King's Message to Parliament of March 7, 1774, to the Declaration of Independence by the United States*. Fourth series, vol. 4. Washington: M. St. Clair Clarke & Peter Force, 1843. https://books.google.com/books?id=IEwMAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA1125&lp_g=PA1125&dq=%22The+English+and+Irish+troops+go+with+infinite+reluctance%22.

[32] See the pamphlet, "The Pamphlet, Entitled, 'Taxation no Tyranny,' Candidly Considered." London, 1775.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=maVbAAAAQAAJ>.

[33] Nikole Hannah-Jones (@nhannahjones), Twitter, December 21, 2019: “Sure, you can start with the texts cited in our response. Also, Gerald Horne’s *Counter Revolution of 1776*. Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock*. All these should be helpful. Thank you for the respectful exchange.”

[34] Jamelle Bouie, “America holds onto an undemocratic assumption from its founding: that some people deserve more power than others.” *New York Times Magazine*. August 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/republicans-racism-african-americans.html>.

[35] “The 1619 Project—Slavery and the American Revolution: A Historical Dialogue.” <https://youtu.be/WnLm8dMAqxE?t=2359>.

[36] David Waldstreicher, “The Hidden Stakes of the 1619 Controversy.” *Boston Review*. January 24, 2020. <http://bostonreview.net/race-politics/david-waldstreicher-hidden-stakes-1619-controversy>.

[37] Nicholas Guyatt, “1619, Revisited.” *New York Times*. October 19, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/19/opinion/1619-nikole-hannah-jones-bret-stephens.html>.

[38] Nicholas Guyatt (@NicholasGuyatt), Twitter, January 22, 2020.

[39] Rana Foroohar, “Books to illuminate the problems of race in America.” *Financial Times*. June 3, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/aeba9304-a57c-11ea-92e2-cbd9b7e28ee6>.

[40] Jason Wilson, “‘It’s a matter of survival’: the black Americans fighting for gun rights.” *The Guardian*. July 27, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jul/27/african-american-black-gun-rights-second-amendment>.

[41] Constance Grady, “A post-Charlottesville reading list to help explain American white supremacy.” August 15, 2017. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/8/15/16145380/post-charlottesville-reading-list-stamped-from-beginning-hitlers-american-model>.

Constance Grady, “A reading list to understand police brutality in America.” June 6, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2020/6/6/21281018/anti-racist-reading-list-police-brutality-syllabus>. This second article instructs readers to “[b]uy the books on this reading list at black-owned stores.”

[42] Elias Isquith, “White supremacy and slavery: Gerald Horne on the real story of American independence.” *Salon.com*. May 30, 2014. https://www.salon.com/2014/05/30/white_supremacy_and_slavery_gerald_horne_on_the_real_story_of_american_independence/.

[43] “‘Counter-Revolution of 1776’: Was U.S. Independence War a Conservative Revolt in Favor of Slavery?” *Democracy Now!* June 27, 2014. https://www.democracynow.org/2014/6/27/counter_revolution_of_1776_was_us.

[44] “The Revolutionary Life Of Paul Robeson: Scholar Gerald Horne On The Great Anti-fascist Singer, Artist, And Rebel.” *The Intercept*. July 15, 2020. <https://theintercept.com/2020/07/15/the-revolutionary-life-of-paul-robeson-scholar-gerald-horne-on-the-great-antifascist-singer-artist-and-rebel/>.

[45] Ryan Grim (@ryangrim), Twitter, August 23, 2020. “Just finishing *The Counter-revolution of 1776* and it really is absurd the way those historians came down on @nhannahjones for that one line in one essay, which was entirely defensible even if it could have been line-edited slightly.”

[46] *Publishers Weekly*, March 3, 2014. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-4798-9340-9>.

[47] Gerald Horne, “Letter to the Editor: Stalin Was No Worse Than the Founding Fathers.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. October 25, 2009. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/stalin-was-no-worse-than-the-founding-fathers/>.



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